



Evidence of Harm: Mercury in Vaccines and the Autism Epidemic: A Medical Controversy

David Kirby

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In the 1990s reported autism cases among American children began spiking, from about 1 in 10,000 in 1987 to a shocking 1 in 166 today. This trend coincided with the addition of several new shots to the nation's already crowded vaccination schedule, grouped together and given soon after birth or in the early months of infancy. Most of these shots contained a little-known preservative called thimerosal, which includes a quantity of the toxin mercury.

Evidence of Harm explores the heated controversy over what many parents, physicians, public officials, and educators have called an "epidemic" of afflicted children. Following several families, David Kirby traces their struggle to understand how and why their once-healthy kids rapidly descended into silence or disturbed behavior, often accompanied by severe physical illness. Alarmed by the levels of mercury in the vaccine schedule, these families sought answers from their doctors, from science, from pharmaceutical companies that manufacture vaccines, and finally from the Center for Disease Control and the Food and Drug Administration-to no avail. But as they dug deeper, the families also found powerful allies in Congress and in the small community of physicians and researchers who believe that the rise of autism and other disorders is linked to toxic levels of mercury that accumulate in the systems of some children.

An important and troubling book, *Evidence of Harm* reveals both the public and unsung obstacles faced by desperate families who have been opposed by the combined power of the federal government, health agencies, and pharmaceutical giants. From closed meetings of the FDA, CDC, and drug companies, to the mysterious rider inserted into the 2002 Homeland Security Bill that would bar thimerosal litigation, to open hearings held by Congress, this book shows a medical establishment determined to deny "evidence of harm" that might be connected with thimerosal and mercury in vaccines. In the end, as research is beginning to demonstrate, the questions raised by these families have significant implications for all children, and for those entrusted to oversee our national health.

Evidence of Harm: Mercury in Vaccines and the Autism Epidemic: A Medical Controversy Details

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Jess Colleton says

It's a big thick book. There's some droning on in it..... but the information is eye-opening. It's a good read if you want to know some of the beginning details of the fight against mercury in vaccines and how it can lead to brain damage.

Jennifer Margulis says

This book is outstanding. David Kirby is a masterful journalist, explaining the controversies surrounding thimerosal (a mercury derived preservative) in childhood vaccinations through the eyes of parents who believe their children were harmed by vaccines. The book follows the struggles of Lyn Redwood, a young R.N. who is married to a doctor and whose son, Will, regresses into autism following his vaccines. Redwood and several others, including Sallie Bernard, Heidi Rogers, and Scott and Laura Bono, found an organization to study the connection between mercury poisoning and autism: SafeMinds.

I earmarked dozens of pages and read this book with a pencil in hand. It's a non-fiction page turner, an alarming read that I couldn't put down. Kirby manages to explain the scientific evidence without losing the reader's interest. While telling the story from the parents' point of view, he meticulously presents both sides of the vaccine debate.

What emerges from this book, though, is a CDC cover-up that is discouraging and infuriating. I've always believed that the people at the CDC care most about public health. It's hard to continue to believe that, however, when you read about the lengths they CDC went through to keep reputable scientists from getting access to raw data from three HMOs in order to test whether the epidemiology really shows that thimerosal-containing vaccines increase the risk of autism. What do they have to say in their own defense? Virtually nothing. CDC officials refused to be interviewed for the book, canceling an interview with the author 20 minutes before it was scheduled to happen.

After reading this book I have less confidence than ever in America's public health officials. They seem to care more about their jobs, their reputations, and keeping Big Pharma happy than they do about the devastatingly high autism rates. Which, sadly continue to climb.

Is thimerosal toxic to human cells? The answer is a resounding yes. (And more research came out this week confirming this is true.) Should anyone have to think twice about banning a mercury-laced preservative from childhood vaccines? The answer is a resounding no. It's truly shameful that the CDC spent this much time, energy, and money covering up the evidence of harm from thimerosal. What else are they hiding from the public? Why is it that the best minds in American has made no progress in finding the cause of, and a cure for, autism?

I've always considered myself pro-vaccine. I chose to vaccinate my children. This is not an anti-vaccine book in any way. But after reading it I feel truly sickened by the failure of our government to protect children.

The flu vaccine that they are pushing on women and children this year that is such a bad match it has been found to be less than 50% effective? It contains thimerosal. Shame on the CDC. Shame on big corporations poisoning our children.

Whether you care about the vaccine issue or not, whether you have children or not, you should read this book.

It's worth quoting from the end of the introduction:

The jury is still out on thimerosal, but deliberations are well under way. One side will emerge vindicated, and the other will earn eternal scorn in the medical history books.

In November 2003, the father of an autistic boy in North Carolina, an antithimerosal activist and a believer, approached a well-known pediatrician after the doctor had delivered a lecture on the safety of vaccines in general, and thimerosal in particular.

"You know something, Doctor?" the father said. "If it turns out that you are right, then I will personally come down to your office and apologize to you with every fiber of my being.

"But if it turns out that you are wrong," he added, "then you are going to hell."

B says

Don't torture yourself, this is some truly terrible journalism.

polly says

Kirby writes good nonfiction: the book flows like a novel, and maintains the reader's interest. The subject matter is important--mercury in vaccines, and the possibility that it could have a role to play in the epidemic of autism and autism spectrum disorders. (Also touched upon is the notion that the MMR can cause autism--as put forth by Dr. Wakefield in Britain.) Whether or not the mercury has caused autism, what is fascinating about this book is the government's approach to the issue--or its non-approach.

A good read.

Wendi Lau says

1 in 45 kids classified Autism Spectrum Disorder in 2016
(National Health Statistics Report using 2014 data, the Center for Disease Control says 1 in 68 using 2012 data).

Takeaway: mercury-free (Thimerosal-free vaccines) flu shots are available for a few \$ more.

Mr. Kirby presents studies, data, and arguments from both sides. Lots of research. Frustrating and really hard to read at times when descriptions of young children with chronic gut pain and months-long bouts of diarrhea presented. Bright-eyed, bushy-tailed youngsters becoming suddenly withdrawn and non-communicative.

I read the Mothering Magazine article years ago and now the research the article drew from. Certain aspects

of the medical establishment are objectionable, not vaccines in general.

I am not anti-vaccine; I am anti-blind trust in the authorities without asking questions or doing my homework. People are optimistic and trusting. We want to believe in our government, authorities. They are supposed to protect us and do the right thing. My daughter pointed out that government and governing bodies are made up of people, people with flaws and backgrounds. So really, instead of referring to them as the FDA or CDC we should be referring to them by the names of the directors and/or governing board members to keep in mind their humanity.

Meaghan Enright says

Really compelling, thorough and surprisingly easy to understand - discusses the evidence linking the use of mercury based preservatives in childhood vaccines to the increased diagnosis of autism in young children. This book definitely makes you think - though the theory is a bit controversial (some discard it as farfetched), the symptoms of mercury poisoning and autism are disturbingly similar, and certainly the levels of mercury present in these vaccinations is cause for concern. (FYI, you can now request vaccines free of thimerosal, the mercury based preservative)

Katie says

I was gripped by this book at first and it made me regret not reading more non-fiction. It is about the Autism epidemic and its correlation to childhood vaccines written by the New York Times health writer David Kirby. I especially appreciated the individual vignettes of each family's unique experiences and struggles. This book is filled with shocking cover-ups, manipulated science and its fair share of politics. It wasn't a "liberals are good, conservatives are bad" book either. There were good guys and bad guys on both sides of the political spectrum. Although Autism's connection to high levels of mercury present as a preservative in vaccines has not been conclusively proven, I came away from this book a believer. Even as I finished reading it, this issue still remains unresolved. My curiosity is piqued however, and I would like to try to keep up with this issue and see what eventually comes out as the real truth. I would recommend this book to anyone with kids, expecting kids, teachers, doctors, nurses or anyone who has a connection to Autism, ADD or other learning disabilities.

Steph says

This is not an easy read and it was really hard to give it a rating in stars. It really makes an interesting accusation against the vaccine manufacturers. Every parent should read this book before making a choice about vaccinating their children.

Rae says

The way this book is written reminds me of *A Civil Action* by Jonathan Harr. It is very readable non-fiction--

especially if you are interested in the topic. Kirby does give a lot of details and that can bog the reader down a bit. I feel like he tried his best to be objective regarding this controversial subject matter.

The jury is still out for me regarding a connection between autism and thimerosal. I definitely think more studies and research needs to be done. And no matter what conclusions I reach after studying the topic a bit more, it IS a reality that powerful men in high places used their influence to make money and block information from being released to the public. Power and money can sure tempt people to do dirty deeds.

All in all, a well-written book that attempts to give both sides of the story.

Rachel says

An eye opening and disturbing account. I think there is compelling evidence that vaccines (especially when they contain known neurotoxins) do cause harm in some instances. Thimerisol was not adequately tested before being used as a vaccine preservative, was known by the drug manufacturer to cause neurological defects after it was added and was continued to be approved for use by the FDA years after they had ample evidence of harm (most still won't openly admit it caused harm). I'm horrified at the conflicts of interest that are rampant between the pharmaceutical companies who manufacture vaccines and the government agencies that are supposed to be regulating ingredients and making vaccine schedules. Why didn't anyone (including the FDA who's job it is to monitor these things or doctors who's job it is to protect their patients health) add up the amounts of mercury that were being injected into babies as more and more vaccinations were added to the mandatory schedule to discover that in some instances injected mercury was exceeding gov't imposed safety levels by more than 150%? It's also shocking to me that the pharmaceutical companies who make vaccinations are protected by the government from any liability for harm that is caused by them. What motivation does this give to produce safe products? Vaccinations are thought by many to play a crucial part in preventing serious illness in our children. However, because of research I have been doing (including reading an actual vaccine package insert--why is this never shown to parents and how can they call it informed consent when it is not?) I no longer believe I can have implicit trust that the government regulatory agencies and the doctors who blindly accept their recommendations have the best interests of my babies in mind all of the time. It would be worth the cost to me to have clean, toxin-free vaccinations, AFTER they have been proven to be safe and effective (which they have not despite what I've been told). There are an increasing amount of intelligent people: scientists, researchers, doctors, parents, who think vaccination safety should be addressed more fully and I agree. Just because (some) vaccinations have been used for years does not mean they are completely safe. In fact many have been changed or discontinued because they were in fact not safe. The burden of proof for the safety of vaccines should rest on the manufacturers, federal and state Government health agencies, and the schools who are now mandating the vaccines (exemptions exist depending on the state), not on parents as it does now.

Mary Frances says

I have been a sceptic about the autism/vaccination link, but this book provided me with some serious food for thought. The reporting on the science used to challenge a link is very eye-opening, and I now am much more inclined to think there may be a link that should be very thoroughly investigated. This book just added to my increasing distrust of the government agencies that are charged with protecting us by reviewing and approving new drugs. it also lends strength to my overall skepticism about the American approach to medicine, which can of course cure but may also harm more people than we acknowledge. I am not completely convinced of the link between vaccines and autism, since it does not account for those cases that

occured before vaccinations had thmersol in them, and those still occurring. But the book does remind us that every time we add a new substance to our environment, we risk unforeseen (or forseen and ignored) consequences.

Christina says

This book was interesting to me because it of its medically-related content, but if I were to rate it based on quality rather than how much I liked it, I think it would fall more in the 2 to 2.5 star range. I found it extremely biased, inflammatory, and emotional. Also, I can only imagine a few people I know who would be interested in a 500-page medical-legal-political tirade like this one. I can hardly believe it was a bestseller. I think a lot of people must have bought it and skimmed it because it's really too dense to be accessible reading.

Let's just begin with the RED (danger!) cover. The title, combined with a photo of a little boy crying as he gets a shot, just makes my blood boil. From first glance the book screams "SEE?! SHOTS HURT KIDS!!!! VACCINES ARE BAD!!!!!" And yeah, don't judge a book by its cover, yadda yadda. But the text didn't prove my first impressions wrong. Chapters have names like "Injecting Fear" and "Mercury Rising." Ugh, I cannot roll my eyes strongly enough.

Every time a new player was introduced, I could tell whether it was going to be a "good guy" (Thimerosal-autism theory supporter) or a "bad guy" (denier of that theory) almost immediately. The "bad guys" were presented in a negative light, right off the bat. Also, all the unsupportive research was flawed or manipulated, while all of the supportive research was perfect. All of the scientists/bureaucrats/politicians who denied a link between Thimerosal and autism were cold, calculating, cruel meanies, whereas the parents were all angels and saints. It's just silly how manipulative this book was.

I guess I should back up a little. Is there a link between the preservative Thimerosal in vaccines and the increase in autism that started in the 1990s? This book certainly makes it seem like a plausible theory, and I have to give the author this much: I thought it was all a crock when I first picked up the book, but after reading it I'm not so sure. Despite my efforts to resist the theory, I can't definitely say that I don't believe it. That said, it all seems like a moot point now that (to quote wikipedia), "In the United States, countries in the European Union and a few other affluent countries, [Thimerosal:] is no longer used as a preservative in routine childhood vaccination schedules." As we all know, autism rates in the U.S. have continued to rise, despite the removal of the icky-poo preservative.

The best parts of this book weren't the hearings or the experimentation or the political power plays. Most interesting to me were the presentations of new autism treatments and the (anecdotal) successful results they've had. I've always thought of autism as an incurable and tragic disorder, and it was wonderful to read a little hope on the subject. I'd like to learn more about treatment options for autistic children.

Overall, I might be reacting to this book so strongly because I'm about to give birth to a baby BOY in about six weeks. Boys are so much more likely be diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, and that generally makes me nervous. I can't refute the idea that there is some sort of environmental trigger, and thanks to *Evidence of Harm*, I'm unreasonably nervous now about the tuna that I've eaten and the flu shots I've received. I know it's silly, but I can't stop worrying. And I'm also annoyed because I fell into David Kirby's trap of fear. Urg.

Laura says

wow. Yet another reason why we wouldn't be so popular worldwide... let's just ship our crap mercury and aluminum vaccines off to China and third-world countries... great idea, Clinton!

Joe says

I had tickets to a baseball game; took the book and read it in the stands. I couldn't put it down, read all night and finished in the morning.

Basically the pharmaceutical companies put mercury in the vaccines as a preservative (since publication of this book, they have been phased out of children's vaccines), claim there is no mercury (a technical point based on the definition of "trace")...and play a chess game of strategy with our health at stake. Mercury is a toxic substance and bio-accumulates in some people; that's just a fact. And for a long time during the 80's & 90's the government ramped up the vaccination program for infant's and injected the "trace amounts of mercury" into newborns (which, based on their bodysize, exceeded the government's own standards for mercury exposure). The pharmaceutical companies refused to use a mercury free preservative because there was "no evidence of harm" (toxicology studies withstanding). The mercury preservative is still used in flu shots. It's amazing that they just don't make a new vaccine preservative that contain's no mercury; but that would cost \$\$, and the pharmaceutical companies don't want to hurt their bottom line, so they hire lobbyists to go to D.C. (for millions) and put in place laws that protect them from being sued (and save even more millions - dollar well spent!). It's sad that no one will be held accountable for this &@%#-up.

Some people will find the chemistry terms too technical, but just skim over those parts and the overlying story will carry you away. I highly recommend it to everyone.

Angelica says

Dense with information, this book follows the struggles that a group of parents faced as they battled to have their theory heard about the link between mercury in vaccines and the growing autism epidemic. The author follows a number of different threads--personal stories about families struggling with the disease, their growing conviction of a link between thimerosal and autism, the fight to find treatments for autism, the fight to access epidemiological evidence from the CDC for a link, the fight to prove a cover-up within some powerful government agencies, the fight... you name it, they've been fighting it.

Whether or not you believe there's a link, it's shocking the lengths some government agencies will go to to cover up evidence, or stymie the efforts of these persistent parents to find answers to their valid questions. Or even to allow them to make a case in court.

It was really frustrating as a parent to read this book. There's no hard evidence that thimerosal causes autism. And yet, there's also no firm evidence that it Doesn't. And in the meantime, because the government is so busy covering things up, and getting in bed with pharmaceutical companies, the waters become really muddy in a hurry.

Because they have not dealt honestly, they will reap a harvest of distrust in the public, which may lead to the demise of their whole vaccination program. If you can't be honest, why would I trust you to inject something into my baby? And then what will they do to protect their vaccination program... promote a fascist state that forces everyone to vaccinate?
