



March 5th, 2019

Senate Hearing: Vaccines Save Lives. What is Driving Preventable Disease Outbreaks?

This Hearing Should Be About Enforcing Informed Consent

Informed consent from a patient or a parent, in the case of a young child, has been at the heart of medical ethics for more than 70 years. The American Academy of Pediatrics statement on the ethics of informed consent includes the following stipulation, *"patients should have explanations, in understandable language, of ...; **the existence and nature of the risks involved; and the existence, potential benefits, and risks of recommended alternative treatments (including the choice of no treatment).**"*

In the case of vaccination, informed consent is often ignored completely in real world settings. By law, all health care providers in the United States are required to give a patient a current CDC Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) before giving a vaccine. In practice, the best-case scenario is usually that the patient or parent gets the VIS as they leave. It is also rare that medical history is discussed to identify contraindications to a vaccine. For example, the MMR VIS states that a patient who "has a parent, brother, or sister with a history of immune system problems" should not get the vaccine, but parents report that these questions aren't always asked. The following are examples of the types of information from the Vaccine Information Statements that should be discussed before giving a vaccine:

From the MMRV VIS: "Severe events have very rarely been reported following MMR vaccination, and might also happen after MMRV. These include: **Deafness, Long-term seizures, coma, lowered consciousness, Brain damage**"

From the Polio VIS and several others: "As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a **vaccine causing a serious injury or death.**"

Informed consent implies a weighing of risks and benefits for an individual patient. Without more safety data, there is no way to achieve this. **Vaccine mandates are directly opposed to informed consent and directly interfere with the relationship between doctor and patient.**

The adult vaccine schedule is expanding rapidly. How many of you have had all of the recommended vaccines? How would you feel if you were forced to get them all in order to work in Congress? And would you want your doctor to be able to inform your consent? The last time you got a vaccine did anyone show you a VIS and discuss the risks first?

Further information and full references are available on our website or by contacting CHD.