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After the biochemistry miniboard, I thought about the prospect of having a disease free child. Every other question mentioned a baby born with some mysterious enzymatic deficiency, mitochondrial disease, and almost always, hepatomegaly. The thing is, most of these diseases are relatively rare. Not one of the questions mentioned the disease affecting so many children: autism. The reason? Every scientist and medical professional is baffled and unable to answer the question of origin or prospective cure.

The fear of autism has crept into every expecting parent, new parent, and even contemplating parent's household. The CDC currently reports that 1 in 150 children in some areas of the United States are afflicted with some degree of spectral autism. Bearing children these days seems to be a roll of the dice; you have more of a chance to have a child with autism than having a car crash. Not to get off the topic, but has anyone heard from Jenny McCarthy lately? If you're a general practitioner trying to protect children through vaccination, then you most certainly have.

While at my preceptorship, I took notice of an article hanging next to the suggested vaccination schedule. Dr. Ari Brown wrote of the "New McCarthyism" in the Wall Street Journal, and he couldn't have been more correct. His article begins with a descriptive memory of a young girl's death from the chicken pox while doing his residency and eloquently flows into Jenny McCarthy's anti-vaccination tirade.

McCarthy's son is diagnosed autistic, and she found the source for sure: vaccinations containing mercury. Following the diagnosis of her son, Ms. McCarthy went to medical school on Google.com. Her book "Louder Than Words: A Mother's Journey in Healing Autism" is a best seller full of contradictions. She writes of her son losing his soul after his MMR vaccine at 2 years old, yet she remarks at the social difference between her son and her friend's children at only 5 months old. She describes the vaccine given in a mercury preservative, yet her son was born after they halted its use in 2001. There are other notable contradictions she published, but who would know that without a medical education? Not many people.

Dr. Brown condemns her use of fame to fill unknowing parents with the fear of autism through vaccination. He praises 100 years of scientific research and advancement and points out her blatant disregard for both. What about all the children that no longer suffer from polio, chicken pox, or measles? Is it so easy to forget about the mortality rate that has declined dramatically since vaccinations, one of public health's 10 greatest advancements? Clearly we have gone wrong somewhere since so many children are now suffering with autism. But is it so easy to point the finger at vaccinations when so much good has come out of them? It is for a mother who is suffering while raising an autistic child.

I see first hand the New McCarthyism. Parents refusing to vaccinate their children, claiming religious reasons when they are not of a religion that prohibits inoculation. This comment comes without reprimanding those with religious exclusion; that opens up a massive can of debatable worms. Parents refusing vaccinations are unaware how they are ruining herd immunity that we have worked so hard to develop. Perhaps they never saw a child suffer from polio.

It is a public health travesty for parents to claim causation with only slight correlation. Isn't that the first rule we learn as scientists? CORRELATION IS NOT CAUSATION. But these parents are not scientist. They are people that love their children and will do anything to figure

out the reason and the cure for the disease that is has stolen their child's soul. I understand the thought path they take, but will never agree with it. The relationship between autism and vaccinations is not nearly solidified enough to reject vaccination, nor do I think it will ever be. We live in a country where people enjoy their lives without small pox, measles, rubella or polio. I don't think that one family has the right to compromise that. Do I blame Jenny McCarthy? Certainly not. Jenny McCarthy did not start the rumor of vaccinations causing autism, but she is certainly perpetuating it.