

MARCH 2016

**COMPULSORY
VACCINATIONS**

**JUSTINE BRIAN &
MARIA O'CONNOR**



MOTION:

**“CHILDHOOD
VACCINATIONS
SHOULD BE
COMPULSORY”**

ORGANISED BY

Institute of Ideas



ANGLO-ISRAEL ASSOCIATION

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

הספרייה הלאומית
المكتبة الوطنية الاسرائيلية
THE NATIONAL
LIBRARY OF ISRAEL



CONTENTS

Introduction

Key terms

The Compulsory Vaccinations debate in context

Essential reading

Backgrounders

Organisations

Audio/Visual

In the news

KEY TERMS

[Common Good](#)

[Community \(herd\) immunity](#)

[Epidemic](#)

[Immunisation](#)

[Measles](#)

[MMR vaccine](#)

[Vaccine](#)

INTRODUCTION

1 of 6

NOTES

1
1
2
4
5
5
6
6

In May 2015, the Israeli government reinstated plans to discourage those opposed to, or opting out of, state vaccinations programmes by stopping child support welfare payments for families where vaccination had not taken place [Ref: [Times of Israel](#)]. A small but increasing number of parents in Israel are “showing a tendency to refuse to have their babies vaccinated according to the state’s vaccination program, and deciding for themselves which vaccines they want administered”, reflecting a recent broader trend across Western societies, where 1 to 20% of parents are deciding against taking up some vaccines for their children [Ref: [Ha’aretz](#)]. A study carried out by the University of Haifa sampled 14,232 babies, of varying socioeconomic background, revealed that “7.4% - 1,052 babies - had not completed the vaccinations for their age group, and were lacking at least one of the three main immunizations in the national program” and that within this group 31.7% of the parents “skipped all three” recommended sets of vaccinations [Ref: [Ha’aretz](#)]. Given 95% of Israeli children have the recommended vaccinations, amongst the highest take-up in the world, [Ref: [Jerusalem Post](#)], and the accepted benchmark for “herd immunity to protect against contagious diseases” [Ref: [Metro](#)], some commentators considered the government’s recent move to be “draconian, unprecedented and dangerous” [Ref: [Times of Israel](#)]. With critics arguing that it discriminates “against its weakest populations amid deepening poverty rates” and that such actions will do nothing to change the minds of “those staunchly against vaccinations, known as ‘anti-vaxxers.’” [Ref: [Times of Israel](#)] This debate in Israel and across the world, raises fundamental questions such as: do parents have a right to choose what happens to their child? Does the government have a responsibility to care for wider society and overrule parental wishes? What is the best way to ensure the greatest levels of immunisation amongst populations - a voluntary or compulsory system?

THE COMPULSORY VACCINATIONS DEBATE IN CONTEXT

2 of 6

NOTES

Immunisation then and now

Prior to the development of vaccines in the eighteenth century, people could only become immune to diseases by contracting, and then surviving them. The process of surviving meant the body had learnt to deal with, and ultimately destroy, the microorganisms that caused the disease. The development of modern immunisation [Ref: [Wikipedia](#)] against infectious diseases can be administered in a number of ways, but most commonly through vaccination. Artificial active immunisation delivers a very small and weakened quantity of virus into the body, giving the immune system a chance to create its own antibodies and other defence mechanisms, thus preparing it for any future attacks of the disease. Many childhood diseases, which in previous eras could have been deadly, are now readily managed and controlled, especially in the West. The introduction of the Polio vaccine in 1953 [Ref: [History.com](#)] for example, has seen an almost complete eradication of the disease worldwide. In 2014 the World Health Organisation celebrated the 40th Anniversary of its World Immunization Week, and continued to encourage global vaccination because “immunization averts 2-3 million deaths each year from diseases such as diphtheria, measles, pertussis, pneumonia, polio, rotavirus diarrhoea, rubella and tetanus” [Ref: [WHO](#)]. Vaccines are considered a breakthrough in preventive medicine, stopping people from contracting severe contagious diseases. In Israel, for example, the vaccine to prevent haemophilus influenza B was included in the vaccination schedule for children in 1994, and since then meningitis and other complications in this age group have become extremely rare; Prevnar shots [Ref: [Drugs.com](#)], introduced in 2009, mean that pneumococcal meningitis and

sepsis are now almost unseen; and the rotavirus vaccine has “significantly cut down the number of children hospitalized for serious diarrhoea” since 2010 [Ref: [Jerusalem Post](#)].

Who is refusing childhood vaccinations, and why?

Over the past two decades there have been increasingly vocal anti-vaccination movements, particularly in the UK and the USA. According to some commentators the motivation of those opposed the programmes are a deep distrust of government, alongside beliefs that “vaccination is motivated by profit and is an infringement of personal liberty and choice; vaccines violate the laws and nature and are temporary or ineffective; and good hygiene is sufficient to protect against disease” [Ref: [Washington Post](#)] In the UK the MMR vaccine [Ref: [NHS](#)] was introduced in 1988, and a decade later in 1998, a controversial and now discredited research paper by Dr Andrew Wakefield, published in medical journal The Lancet, one of the world’s oldest and best known medical journals, suggested a connection between the MMR vaccination and the development of autism in children. Although Dr Wakefield’s research has been rejected, it is widely agreed that the scare about MMR resulted in a decline in measles vaccinations in the UK - falling from a peak of 94% for two year olds in 1995, to 78% in 2003 [Ref: [Independent](#)]. But it’s not the case that those who rejected the MMR jab for their children were ideologically opposed to vaccinations as ‘anti-vaxxers’ often are. Parents often found themselves in an impossible position, as parent Kirsty Grocott explained: “We were making decisions about an illness that many of us had never seen at first hand. Measles itself was an abstract compared to the perceived threat of autism. Parents made decisions

best interests of their children, people capable of rational and intelligent thought, decided to eschew the vaccination because they genuinely felt that the risk was too great.” [Ref: [Telegraph](#)] In May 2013 the findings of a study carried out by the University of Haifa and funded by the National Institute for the Health Policy Research showed that 3.4% refuse for medical reasons and 41.3% of parents refused the vaccinations on principle [Ref: [Ha’aretz](#)]. Socioeconomic elements also factor into the refusal to vaccinate. “While socioeconomically better-off mothers refused vaccinations as a matter of choice, poorer mothers miss vaccinations because of behavioural or cultural blocks, lack of knowledge or organization”. [Ref: [Ha’aretz](#)] The study also found that university-educated parents were 2.13 times more likely to refuse vaccinations compared to parents with a high school education. Jewish parents were 4.22 times more likely to refuse to have their children vaccinated compared to Muslims, and Christian parents were 3.29% more likely to refuse than Muslim parents [Ref: [Ha’aretz](#)].

Consequences for ‘anti-vaxxers’ in Israel

Recent figures reveal that the number of parents opting out of some or all childhoods vaccinations are “primarily from within some segments of the ultra-Orthodox community as well as Bedouin families in southern Israel with limited access to medical treatment (another group is found among upper-to-middle class Israelis, based on ideological grounds)” [Ref: [Times of Israel](#)]. “As a society, we don’t condone behaviour that puts others at risk for injury or death” argues American doctor Robert Pearl. “Refusing vaccination for reasons other than a serious medical condition is unfair and dangerous to those who can’t protect themselves.”

[Ref: [Forbes](#)] The key argument about herd immunity, put forward by many calling for compulsory vaccinations, is that an individual choice, when it puts other members of society of risk, is no longer a valid one. “Risking other children’s lives, and other parents’ pain, is exactly what you’re doing when you don’t vaccinate your child: you’re not just making decisions about your children’s health, but the health and safety of the children around them.” [Ref: [Guardian](#)] Should the children be punished for the choice of their parents? Should the state be allowed to exercise such levels of control on its citizens? While the legal measure would not be unprecedented globally (Australia has conditioned benefits on vaccines beginning in 2016 [Ref: [BBC News](#)]), this debate raises difficult issues about the importance of parental autonomy to make decisions about their children, versus the needs of society as a whole: “The fact that individual rationality is sometimes at odds with the requirements of the common good is a quandary at the heart of moral and political philosophy. The function of the state, according to standard liberal theories, is to find a practical resolution to this central tension and solve collective action problems that otherwise won’t get solved in order to provide public goods—public order, military defence, public sanitation, environmental protection, etc—that otherwise won’t get provided.” [Ref: [Economist](#)] But others counter that: “In an era when people are less accepting of authority and do not expect to do something because the government says so, trying to enforce immunization may actually make matters worse.” [Ref: [New York Times](#)]

ESSENTIAL READING

[Why James Wilson and The Economist supported compulsory vaccinations](#)

Economist 24 February 2015

[More Israeli parents refusing to vaccinate their babies according to state regulations](#)

Ha'aretz 4 June 2013

[Why did I think it appropriate to deny my children the MMR vaccine?](#)

Kirsty Grocott *Telegraph* 25 April 2013

FOR

[It's not about just your child: Why vaccination should be mandatory for kids](#)

Kristen Thompson *Metro* 10 February 2015

[A Doctor's take: why measles vaccination must be mandatory](#)

Robert Pearl *Forbes* 5 February 2015

[Resorting to freedom](#)

Economist 4 February 2015

[Your thoughts about vaccines don't trump another child's medical reality](#)

Jessica Valenti *Guardian* 3 February 2015

4 of 6

NOTES

AGAINST

[Everyone is lining up to punish parents who are anti-vaccination. Isn't that worrying?](#)

Jason Wilson *Guardian* 13 April 2015

[Why I believe vaccines should not be mandatory](#)

Deborah Jacobi *Algemeiner* 2 March 2015

[In Britain, vaccinate with persuasion not coercion](#)

David Elliman & Helen Bedford *New York Times* 23 March 2014

[Parents deserve to have a choice about vaccinations](#)

Jennifer Margulis *New York Times* 23 March 2014

IN DEPTH

[What if not all parents who question vaccines are foolish and anti-science?](#)

Alice Dreger *New Statesman* 4 June 2015

[Cultural perspectives on vaccination](#)

The College of Physicians of Philadelphia 15 December 2014

BACKGROUNDEERS

[I was on the front line of L.A.'s last measles outbreak](#)

Ken Fujioka *Time Magazine* 24 August 2015

['We are not anti-science': mothers defend right to not vaccinate children](#)

Guardian 22 February 2015

[Onwards and upwards](#)

Economist 21 February 2015

[Return of the vaccine wars](#)

David Oshinsky *Wall Street Journal* 20 February 2015

[Shifting the old debate over vaccines](#)

Theresa MacPhail *Huffington Post* 9 February 2015

[The UK's anti-vaccination movement is alive and well, and we can't ignore it](#)

Barbara Speed *Independent* 6 February 2015

[How to cause a measles epidemic in 5 easy steps](#)

Dr Paul Marantz *Huffington Post* 6 February 2015

['No jab, no pay': should parents be forced to vaccinate their kids?](#)

The Week 4 February 2015

[To the anti-vaxxers: please don't give measles to my tiny, helpless future baby](#)

Lindy West *Guardian* 3 February 2015

[Of vaccines and vacuous starlets](#)

Economist 31 January 2015

[The Disneyland measles outbreak and the disgraced doctor who whipped up vaccination fear](#)

Terrence McCoy *Washington Post* 23 January 2015

5 of 6

NOTES

[Why some experts want mandatory flu vaccinations for school children](#)

Justin Worland *Time Magazine* 7 January 2015

[Debate: given the measles outbreak, should vaccinations be mandatory?](#)

New York Times 23 March 2014

[Why I wish my daughter had been vaccinated](#)

Sophie Heawood *Guardian* 24 April 2013

[Timeline: How the Andrew Wakefield MMR vaccine scare story spread](#)

Independent 12 April 2013

[Measles Explained — Vaccinate or Not?](#)

In a Nutshell

[Salk announces polio vaccine](#)

History.com

ORGANISATIONS

[National Vaccine Information Centre](#)

[State of Israel Ministry of Health](#)

[World Health Organisation](#)

IN THE NEWS

[California set to mandate childhood vaccines amid intense fight](#)

New York Times 25 June 2015

[State to 'anti-vaxxers': No vaccination, no child support](#)

Times of Israel 20 May 2015

[Australia's 'measles-free' status under threat as vaccination rates drop to 50 per cent](#)

Daily Mail 1 May 2015

[California's measles outbreak is over, but vaccine fight continues](#)

L.A Times 17 April 2015

[Australia to stop welfare cash of anti-vaccine parents](#)

BBC News 12 April 2015

[US states face fierce protests from anti-vaccine activists](#)

Guardian 10 April 2015

[India and 10 other Asian countries declared polio free](#)

Guardian 28 March 2015

[Measles cases jump to 119 in Quebec area of Canada](#)

BBC News 11 March 2015

[WHO 'taken aback' at measles outbreak](#)

BBC News 25 February 2015

[Toddler death fuels compulsory vaccination debate](#)

BBC News 23 February 2015

[Vaccine critics turn defensive over measles](#)

New York Times 30 January 2015

[Disneyland measles outbreak leaves many anti-vaccination parents unmoved](#)

Guardian 25 January 2015

[95% of Israeli children get their recommended vaccinations](#)

Jerusalem Post 24 April 2014

[Petition filed with High Court against polio vaccination campaign](#)

Israel News 18 August 2013

[Swansea measles epidemic: Man who died had measles](#)

BBC News 19 April 2013

[Compulsory vaccination urged after measles outbreaks](#)

Guardian 3 June 2009

[Doctors say no compulsory vaccines](#)

Daily Mail

6 of 6

NOTES

AUDIO/VISUAL

[Measles Explained — Vaccinate or Not?](#)

In a Nutshell

ADVICE FOR DEBATING MATTERS



FOR STUDENTS

READ EVERYTHING

In the Topic Guide and in the news - not just your side of the argument either.

STATISTICS ARE GOOD BUT.....

Your opponents will have their own too. They'll support your points but they aren't a substitute for them.

BE BOLD

Get straight to the point but don't rush into things: make sure you aren't falling back on earlier assertions because interpreting a debate too narrowly might show a lack of understanding or confidence.

DON'T BACK DOWN

Try to take your case to its logical conclusion before trying to seem 'balanced' - your ability to challenge fundamental principles will be rewarded - even if you personally disagree with your arguments.

DON'T PANIC

Never assume you've lost because every question is an opportunity to explain what you know. Don't try to answer every question but don't avoid the tough ones either.

FOR TEACHERS

Hoping to start a debating club? Looking for ways to give your debaters more experience? Debating Matters have a wide range of resources to help develop a culture of debate in your school and many more Topic Guides like this one to bring out the best in your students. For these and details of how to enter a team for the Debating Matters Competition visit our website, www.debatingmatters.com

FOR JUDGES

Judges are asked to consider whether students have been brave enough to address the difficult questions asked of them. Clever semantics might demonstrate an acrobatic mind but are also likely to hinder a serious discussion by changing the terms and parameters of the debate itself.

Whilst a team might demonstrate considerable knowledge and familiarity with the topic, evading difficult issues and failing to address the main substance of the debate misses the point of the competition. Judges are therefore encouraged to consider how far students have gone in defending their side of the motion, to what extent students have taken up the more challenging parts of the debate and how far the teams were able to respond to and challenge their opponents.

As one judge remarked *'These are not debates won simply by the rather technical rules of schools competitive debating. The challenge is to dig in to the real issues.'* This assessment seems to grasp the point and is worth bearing in mind when sitting on a judging panel.



**“A COMPLEX
WORLD REQUIRES
THE CAPACITY
TO MARSHALL
CHALLENGING IDEAS
AND ARGUMENTS”**

**LORD BOATENG, FORMER BRITISH HIGH
COMMISSIONER TO SOUTH AFRICA**