



PRESS RELEASE

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GMC Rules Against Wakefield et al., Yet Medical Establishment Agrees Further Study of GI Disease in Children with Autism Is Top Priority

Thursday, January 27, 2010 - Today the General Medical Council (GMC), the regulatory body for doctors in the UK, made findings of fact in connection to a complaint filed by journalist Brian Deer. The complaint alleged conflicts of interest and unethical research against Dr. Andrew Wakefield, Dr. John Walker-Smith and Dr. Simon Murch relating to their 1998 case series published in the Lancet. As a result of these findings, the GMC will now determine the severity and appropriate sanctions, which could go so far as the loss of their licenses to practice medicine.

SafeMinds is very disappointed by the GMC's findings. The false testimony and the ensuing GMC FTP hearing have had the effect of delaying necessary research into cause and treatment for autism, and dissuading scientists from pursuing research relating to vaccines as a cause of chronic disease.

In the Lancet paper Wakefield et al reported a novel inflammatory bowel disease in 12 children with developmental regression (autism) and expressly stated that "We did not prove an association between measles mumps and rubella vaccine and the syndrome described." The conclusion drawn by the case series was that, "Further investigations are needed to examine this syndrome and its possible relation to the vaccine." The study's conclusion and call for additional research is often incorrectly misinterpreted as a call to discontinue immunization against measles, mumps and rubella.

It is widely known that many children with autism suffer from gastrointestinal disease and requires further scientific investigation and treatment. This field of research is in fact identified as a short term research priority in the [Strategic Plan for Autism Spectrum Disorder Research](#) issued by U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC). Additionally, the following organizations and agencies have also clearly stated the need for research related to the potential relationship between gastrointestinal disease and autism.

- **The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)** - [Evaluation, Diagnosis, and Treatment of Gastrointestinal Disorders in Individuals With ASDs: A Consensus Report](#) states "The evidence for abnormal gastrointestinal permeability in individuals with ASDs is limited. Prospective studies should be performed to determine the role of abnormal permeability in neuropsychiatric manifestations of ASDs." (Statement 5).
- **AAP** also says in their [Recommendations for Evaluation and Treatment of Common Gastrointestinal Problems in Children With ASDs](#) that "Well-designed trials are needed to develop an evidence base for optimal diagnostic and treatment strategies to manage gastrointestinal disorders in children with ASDs."
- **The Center for Disease Control's (CDC)** [National CADDRE Study: Child Development and Autism](#) states that, "A number of factors will be studied for their potential link with ASDs. These factors were picked after an in-depth look at existing studies...These factors include...**Gastrointestinal features:** The study will follow up on reports that children with autism have abnormal gastrointestinal function, and whether it might be related to the causes of autism."

Scores of parents have reported, including from the original group of 12, that Dr. Wakefield's work has brought great relief to their children when no other doctor was willing to take their medical condition seriously. While controversy will continue to rage regarding Dr. Wakefield and the MMR vaccine, his key point and interest has been validated time and again; many children with autism are experiencing great suffering due to co-existing gastrointestinal disease and further research is urgently needed to identify the cause and most effective treatments. SafeMinds supports these concerns and calls for additional research into gastrointestinal disease in individuals with autism.

SafeMinds is a charitable non-profit and leader in funding and advancing the science regarding mercury exposure as it relates to autism. Our expertise extends beyond mercury-related exposures to broader vaccine safety issues, as many of our Board Members hold government agency committee positions such as the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, various CDC Vaccine Committees, the Department of Defense Autism Spectrum Disorder Research Program and the National Vaccine Advisory Committee's Vaccine Safety Working Group.