



Safe Minds Action Alert
on New York Times Thimerosal-Autism Article
(issued June 26, 2005)

The June 25th publication of the New York Times contained a front page article titled "On Autism's Cause, It's Parents vs. Research" by Gardiner Harris and Anahad O'Connor. The article includes several references to SafeMinds.

Although directors of SafeMinds were interviewed for the story, information we presented to the reporters, such as peer-reviewed research papers on the harmful effects of thimerosal, was not included in the published article. In addition, the article contains numerous disturbing errors of fact, omissions of fact, and a consistent bias which call into question the credibility and motivation of the authors.

The primary responsibility of the media in gathering and distributing news and opinion is to serve the general welfare of the public by providing accurate information which enables the public to make informed judgments on issues that impact their lives. The Times authors acknowledge the critical importance of the thimerosal issue to public health. The requirement for a balanced portrayal of the issue is not trivial.

Therefore, SafeMinds is asking the New York Times to immediately publish corrections to and investigate the journalistic process surrounding this article in an effort to fulfill their service obligation to the American public and adhere to their historically high journalistic standards.

The New York Times has a clear channel through which readers can express their dissatisfaction with the reporting process and editorial choices made by the current staff. This is the office of the Public Editor. The Public Editor has three obligations:

- Making sure the concerns of readers and the public about the paper are heard -- and heeded when they are valid.
- Monitoring The Time's journalistic integrity -- which ... means accuracy and fairness in both reality and perception.
- Publicly assessing the newsroom's performance in these areas to enhance readers' understanding of the journalistic process and to remind editors and reporters to do their best.

SafeMinds asks those of you who have concerns about the Times article to email The Public Editor, Byron Calame, at public@nytimes.com. Communications are taken more seriously if they are short and factual.

SafeMinds will be issuing a letter to the editor of the Times listing the factual errors in the article and the corrections needed. SafeMinds will also be sending the Public Editor a letter on concerns over the journalistic process, and we will issue this publicly once it is sent.