

For Immediate Release

Contact: Alison Strock
202.628.7772

astrock@venturecommunications.com

Autism Study by Dr. Eric Fombonne is Inaccurate and Incomplete; SafeMinds Aims to Correct Misinformation

Washington, DC – A Quebec study to be published in the July 2006 issue of *Pediatrics*, the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, states that it is “very clear” that there is no relationship between mercury-based thimerosal in vaccines and the onset of autism. Dr. Eric Fombonne of the McGill University Health Center bases his opinion on a study among schoolchildren in Quebec, Canada. According to an analysis by SafeMinds, however, the study methodology is unlikely to lend itself to such declarative statements and should be treated with skepticism, for a number of reasons.

The study looked at 27,749 students in grades kindergarten through 12th grade in a Montreal school district and found 187 cases of autism. The vast majority of these cases (more than 90%) were born in years in which thimerosal vaccines were widely used for infants in Quebec, as they were in the US. Only a tiny fraction of the autism students were born when thimerosal-free DTP and Hib vaccines were given, and these students may have been exposed to thimerosal from the Hepatitis B vaccine newly recommended for infants of foreign born parents, which made up over one fourth of the greater Montreal population.

Dr. Fombonne wrongfully claims that large-population studies in the United States, England and Denmark also disprove a link between mercury and autism, and he states that “there is no autism epidemic.” He conveniently ignores the vast body of scientific evidence that has shown that environmental factors such as mercury may have caused the increased number of autism diagnoses in the US and other countries. Dr. Fombonne’s actions have not historically been in the best interest of families with autism—he has declared himself an expert witness on behalf of various pharmaceutical companies in thimerosal-related litigation. Thimerosal is a serious poison that is harmful via inhalation, ingestion or contact with skin. Furthermore, thimerosal-containing vaccines elevate mercury levels in the body to a level where adverse neurological outcomes are known to occur. It is irresponsible for any pediatric doctor to justify injecting our children with mercury.

The prevalence of all autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) has risen to 1 in 166 children in the past 20 years. Several independent federal agencies and respected scientists and researchers have received federal funds to investigate the autism epidemic and the biological plausibility of a link between mercury and ASDs. Multiple studies have indicated that there is a connection between childhood vaccines containing thimerosal and the incidence of autism. No conclusions have been made rejecting a link between mercury and autism.

The Coalition for SafeMinds (Sensible Action For Ending Mercury-Induced Neurological Disorders) is a private nonprofit organization founded to investigate and raise awareness of the risks to infants and children of exposure to mercury from medical products, including thimerosal in vaccines. SafeMinds challenges inconclusive studies such as Dr. Fombonne's soon-to-be published Quebec study and promotes responsible research and education in effort to fill in the missing pieces of this puzzle.

Further information about SafeMinds and the harmful effects from mercury exposure may be found at www.safeminds.org and at <http://www.cleanair.org/Air/mercury.html>.

###