

Response to “Just a Little Prick” by Peter and Hilary Butler

Summary

This work by Peter and Hilary Butler is a summary of Hilary’s personal study and interpretation of orthodox, complementary and alternative medical literature, media stories and various expert opinions concerning vaccination interspersed with a variety of personal accounts of adverse events following immunisation. The authors argue that vaccinations are ineffective and unsafe. They also make allegations of health professional, government and industry cover-up and conspiracy-for-profit.

Peter and Hilary Butler also conclude that the impact of mass vaccination programmes on control of infectious disease is overrated. In this work, they are strong advocates for the role of gut flora, mammalian milk and theories of endotoxaemia in the modulation of the immune system, and the use of nutritional supplementation for the treatment and prevention of infectious illnesses. A premise of the book is that the low probability of contracting a vaccine-preventable disease and the risks of vaccination render mass vaccination programmes both unnecessary and dangerous.

The authors make a wide variety of claims, and a full discussion and response to them are beyond the scope of this critique. The Immunisation Advisory Centre’s position on this work includes points of agreement and disagreement.

Points of agreement with the authors

We agree with the following claims within the limitations described.

- » Nutrition, hygiene, sanitation and socio-economic disparities play an important role in both the spread and control of infectious diseases. They are an integral part of health interventions to control infectious disease within populations and among individuals.
- » Breastfeeding reduces the incidence and impact of some infectious diseases in infants and should be actively promoted.
- » There is some evidence to suggest environmental factors such as sleep deprivation, psychological state and environmental toxins may affect immune response to both natural infection, and in some cases, to vaccination. However, current evidence does not indicate that vaccination is unsafe or ineffective in such situations, or that, as the authors imply, vaccinations are causative mechanisms for infectious disease.
- » In the light of current evidence, a mass BCG vaccination is untenable as a strategy for the prevention and control of tuberculosis in New Zealand. However, we would disagree that selective BCG immunisation is unjustified on the basis of current evidence.

Points of disagreement with the authors

We find the following claims to be unsubstantiated by current evidence from orthodox medical literature.

- » Pertussis vaccination is ineffective and unsafe.
- » Meningococcal vaccination is unnecessary because *N. meningitidis* is carried asymptotically in most people.
- » Hepatitis B immunisation is dangerous, unnecessary, and is the cause of a number of idiopathic illnesses.
- » Influenza immunisation is ineffective and unsafe.
- » MMR vaccination is unsafe and measles infection is harmless.
- » Varicella is harmless.
- » Oral polio vaccine is ineffective in preventing the transmission of polio.
- » Diphtheria immunisation is ineffective.
- » Vaccines contain toxic compounds, including aluminium, thiomersal, and viruses.
- » Vaccination may pre-dispose to *E. coli* endotoxaemia.
- » Nutritional therapy, including high-dose vitamin therapy, prevents infection.
- » Advice obtained from The Immunisation Advisory Centre is biased because we receive funding from pharmaceutical companies that manufacture vaccines.
- » Links to personal accounts of vaccine-preventable diseases are provided throughout the work.

Conclusion

While the authors raise some valid points, The Immunisation Advisory Centre’s interpretation of the available evidence from orthodox medical literature does not support many of the arguments used by the authors to reach their conclusions and, in our opinion, misleading.

The Immunisation Advisory Centre reports no conflict of interest relevant to the information provided or any aspects of the organisation, financial or otherwise.