

## Letter in Support of Dr. Jovanna Stjokovic

May 24, 2019

### To Whom It May Concern:

I write in support of Dr. Jovanna Stjokovic and her right to express opinions on the safety of vaccinations and the need for reform of vaccine policy.

We are in a time of growing intolerance for minority viewpoints. This is exemplified by Dr. Stjokovic, a brave figure in the medical field, who is willing to express her concerns about the dangers of vaccines but is now under the threat of losing her medical license for doing so. Her concerns are valid and she should be allowed to voice them without censure.

If anything needs to be done, it is to carry out research to demonstrate the safety of current vaccination programs and to allow families to opt out of the programs if they wish. There should be no mandatory vaccination under any circumstances.

The United States has the highest number of required vaccines of any nation, but also high and growing rates of infant and under-five mortality, as well as high rates of neurodevelopmental disorders, allergies and infectious diseases such as ear infections and pneumonia.

There is growing evidence that vaccines may be a factor in the ever-increasing rate of autism. Studies comparing vaccinated and unvaccinated children, such as my own, reveal that vaccinated children are much more susceptible to neurological diseases, allergies and ear infections than the unvaccinated. The science is by no means settled on the question of the risk/benefit ratio of vaccines, and more research is needed. It is only reasonable therefore that people should have the right to decide whether they or their children should be vaccinated.

Dr. Jovanna Stjokovic, a physician in Belgrade, Serbia, specializing in psychiatry, is an activist for vaccine freedom of choice as a basic human right. In 2016, a new law in Serbia ruled that no one could refuse vaccination except on the basis of medical side effects, and children have to be vaccinated in order to attend kindergarten or school. That led Dr. Stjokovic to join with other parents to found an association to support the human rights regarding vaccination.

All legal steps were taken to amend the law, but to no avail. Parents refusing to vaccinate are now being punished with large fines. Parents lacking the money to pay the fines are being imprisoned. The Minister of Education has threatened to pass a law to take unvaccinated children away from their parents.

There is an intensive media threat against her association. To date 43 activists and parents have been criminally charged for "spreading panic" about the risks of vaccines. The parents have taken their lawsuit against the country of Serbia to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Recently, Dr. Stjokovic learned that the Serbian Chamber of Medicine intends to revoke her medical license due to her commitment to vaccine freedom of choice.

I write to urge the Serbia Chamber of Medicine not to take this drastic step. Vaccination is an invasive medical procedure like any other, with potential risks as well as benefits. But almost nothing is known about the risks. Besides, the infectious diseases against which the vaccines are available are seldom fatal, and experiencing the natural infection leads to improved health and the prevention of allergies and cancers of many kinds.

Here is a statement I would like to offer in support of Dr. Stjokovic:

*Why has autism become epidemic in the U.S. and other developed countries?*

From 30% to 40% or more children with ASD today have a *regressive form* of autism in which an initial phase of normal growth and development is followed between ages 1 or 2 by the loss of acquired language skills and speech, and withdrawal of interest in the social environment. There was a strong association between the Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) and autism during earlier epidemics of rubella. In a paper I am about to submit for publication, I am proposing that CRS-associated autism occurred via rubella infection-induced alterations in vitamin A metabolism, followed by liver damage and the entry of stored retinoids (vitamin A and its congeners) into the circulation in toxic concentrations. In the same paper I am suggesting that rising rates of autism are due primarily to a post-natal factor or factors to which virtually all children are exposed, similarly causing liver damage and endogenous forms of vitamin A intoxication.

A candidate for such a factor is the practice of administering multiple vaccinations in close succession as part of the *routine childhood vaccination program*, which is universally required for school and daycare attendance. While the benefits of vaccines are well documented, few vaccines or vaccine combinations or their ingredients have been tested for long-term safety by randomized controlled trials or other means. The measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is one of few vaccines that have been studied to date in relation to autism. However, the groups selected for comparing autism rates have typically been exposed to other vaccines, effectively comparing rates between highly vaccinated groups of children and thus obscuring the potential impact of vaccines as a whole.

Concerns that vaccines could be contributing to increasing rates of autism include the following points:

- 1) The vaccination schedule has been expanded during the same period of rapid increase in rates of autism and other chronic illnesses. The impact of this expanded schedule, in which many vaccinations are administered at the same time or in close succession, has not been studied.
- 2) The vaccine adjuvant aluminum, a known neurotoxin, has been implicated in autism and other neurodegenerative diseases.
- 3) Vaccines are known to cause severe adverse effects, including immune system disorders, brain damage and even deaths on occasion. However, these outcomes are considered so rare that vaccines are believed safe to administer to all healthy infants and children. In fact, the extent of serious injury from vaccines is uncertain.

To date, no officially sponsored study has compared autism rates in vaccinated and completely unvaccinated groups of children. Based on a recommendation by the U.S. Institute of Medicine, my colleagues and I compared vaccinated and unvaccinated children on a broad range of health outcomes in an anonymous online survey in which mothers were asked to provide information on their 6- to 12-year-old biological children. Questions included pregnancy-related conditions and exposures, birth history, vaccinations, physician-diagnosed illnesses, medications, and the use of health services. The survey yielded a sample of 666 children, of which 261 (39%) were unvaccinated. As expected, the

vaccinated were significantly less likely than the unvaccinated to have been diagnosed with chickenpox and whooping cough. However, the vaccinated were significantly more likely to have been diagnosed with allergic rhinitis, eczema, middle ear infection, pneumonia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and learning disability. The vaccinated were also more likely to use medication for allergies, to have used antibiotics in the past 12 months, to have been fitted with ventilation ear tubes, and have spent one or more nights in a hospital. Children who had received some but not all recommended vaccinations (“partially vaccinated”) had increased but intermediate odds of allergic rhinitis, eczema, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, a learning disability, and chronic disease between those of unvaccinated and fully vaccinated children, suggesting a dose-response relationship between vaccinations and adverse effects.

The strength and consistency of the findings (e.g., in terms of links between diagnoses and medication use) suggest the possibility that some aspect of the current vaccination schedule could be contributing to the epidemic of autism and other forms of chronic illness in children. Follow-up studies are urgently needed to replicate or refute the findings.

Based in part on these findings, published in 2017, I urge that medical practitioners such as Dr. Jovanna Stjokovic should be allowed and indeed encouraged to question established views about the safety of vaccines, in order to encourage more research and thereby help to optimize the use of vaccines for children and adults.

Sincerely,



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References to my research on vaccines  
<https://oatext.com/pdf/JTS-3-186.pdf>  
<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/16/1/111>