To Vaccinate or Not Vaccinate?

The Importance of the Measles Vaccine

by Sharon Moise, MD
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I’m an emergency medicine physician – and I’m a mom.

So I get it when moms worry. I worry.

There are a lot of things moms can’t do anything about.

Our kids fall off the monkey bars at school. They feed their vegetables to the dog. They share a cold with every kid in the second grade class. They fall and skin not one knee but two.

There are a lot of things moms can do a lot about. Our kids wear helmets when they ride their bikes. They feed their vegetables to the dog. They share a cold with every kid in the second grade class. They fall and skin not one knee but two.

Measles, also called rubeola, is making a comeback because some parents aren’t vaccinating their children. Well-informed but poorly informed parents have heard that vaccines are unsafe, and sometimes even cause autism.

This fear has no scientific basis. None.

What does have a scientific basis is that measles is a serious, even deadly, disease – and it is 100% preventable.

How do we know the vaccine is safe? Independent groups of experts in the U.S., including the National Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Medicine, have extensively studied the concerns linking autism to vaccines. Findings are clear: there is no link between the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine and autism.

This finding is equally clear: not vaccinating your children against measles exposes them to significant risk.

Measles can be a serious disease that can cause pneumonia, ear infections, diarrhea, deafness, brain damage, and even death. Three out of 10 people who get measles develop one or more of these complications, and more than...
one-fourth of children younger than five who have measles are so sick they need to stay in a hospital. Measles is especially dangerous to the very young, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems. It is highly contagious and spreads through the air. The measles virus stays active in a room for up to two hours after an infected person has gone.

Measles was considered eliminated by 2000 in the U.S. due to success with the U.S. vaccination program. However, since the early 2000s, the number of measles cases has increased due, in large part, to parental decision not to vaccinate. In 2014, the U.S. experienced 23 measles outbreaks, including one large outbreak of 383 cases, occurring primarily among unvaccinated Amish communities in Ohio. In 2015, the U.S. experienced a large, multi-state measles outbreak linked to a popular theme park in California. In 2017, an outbreak in Minnesota made headlines.

As 2018 begins, the United Kingdom is facing measles outbreaks, and just like outbreaks in the US, they have been attributed to parents deciding not to have their children vaccinated. In countries where the measles vaccination is not widespread, the number of cases of measles remains high. Worldwide last year, there were an estimated of 20 million cases of measles. The fact remains: measles is still a threat.

Why is it that some parents don’t protect their children against measles? The supposed “link” between the MMR vaccine and autism originated in “research” by Andrew Wakefield, a gastroenterologist in the United Kingdom. In 1998, Wakefield and colleagues published an article in the British medical journal The Lancet, claiming that the measles vaccine in MMR leads to brain damage and autism. No researchers could reproduce these findings in further studies. Wakefield’s findings were further discredited when an investigation found that he did not disclose that funding for his research came from lawyers seeking evidence to use against vaccine manufacturers. Wakefield lost his medical license in the United Kingdom, and in 2010, The Lancet retracted the original article.

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Do I vaccinate my kids? Absolutely. Just like I lock up the bike unless a helmet is worn each and every time they ride it. Just like I check their teeth – not their toothbrushes, but their teeth – after they claim to have brushed after meals. Just like I watch for imaginative disposal of unwanted vegetables.

Are my kids accident-proof? No. Are they illness-proof? No. But they have every advantage I can give them, and that includes being vaccinated.

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**The Real Value of Injury Triage**

by Craig T. Deneau
National Practice Leader - Triage Services

Injury triage has become more common over the last several years. Although the market is still in the process of adopting the service as a best practice, there are fewer risk managers that start off a conversation regarding triage by asking: “What’s that?” Indeed, injury triage is no longer a service only utilized by early-adopting, forward-thinking risk professionals. The service has proven its value in enough settings and employer types that adoption of the service will continue on to virtually all employers who have exposure to work-related injuries.

So, what is the reason why more employers, insurers, and carriers are beginning to use the service? The easy answer is that injury triage reduces the number of claims that are produced. By reducing claim volume, one can easily assume that overall claim costs for an employer or insurer will also decrease. This seems logical, right? While that may be true, looking at triage simply as a means to reduce claim frequency might be missing the bulk of the savings and efficiencies gained from use of Medcor’s injury triage service.

Rather, a strong argument can be made that the real value is delivered through the use of the service from what might be referred to as “second-tier savings.” These are ancillary savings that are often unique to an employer’s situation. Many times the real value of utilizing Medcor’s injury triage has much to do with the specific challenges faced by an employer. For example, an employer that operates on a 24-hour basis or during late-night hours might have a significant dilemma regarding Emergency Room visits. ER’s are typically the only place where medical treatment is available at night. This type of medical treatment is expensive and not conducive to the overall goals of a well-managed workers’ compensation program. Medcor’s ability to greatly reduce the frequency of ER visits would

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What’s it like to provide Medcor’s health services in Canada? Well, it’s interesting and challenging and always an adventure. Need medical care in the middle of a million-acre forest? No problem. Along a pipeline in the dead of winter? Sure thing. At a rocky, hard-to-reach seismic drilling site? We’ve got you covered. Our Mobile Treatment Centers and staff can provide high-level medical care for any worksite emergency or injury. Anywhere health services are needed in Canada, we can be there.

The “Great White North” has a vast array of climates and terrain, people and wildlife that keep us on our toes. We have a saying up here: If you don’t like the weather, wait five minutes – it will change. So it’s important we are prepared for anything.

When we venture into northern Alberta for pipeline building or directional drilling, only the welders get the day off when it’s -40°C. (Fun fact: -40°C and -40°F are the point on the thermometer where Celsius and Fahrenheit meet as one very cold temperature.) The extreme cold – likely colder with the wind chill – makes a good case for shorter shifts, but there is still lots to do. We ensure our Mobile Treatment Centers, our “clinics-on-wheels” that we use to provide medical care to widespread worksites, stay warm for those “just in case” moments. We remind the workers at our tailgate meetings of the importance of staying covered up and watching for signs of frostbite. Why do we work so hard in the winter when it is so cold? One word: Muskeg. Muskeg is a swampy type of terrain and is found along many of the required pipeline routes. When it is frozen, it is easy to dig and great to drive on; our Mobile Treatment Centers can drive down the right-of-way no differently than on a smooth gravel road. When spring starts to rear its ugly head, the muskeg is not so fun. It becomes smelly and will stick to anything it touches. If it gets too warm, the muskeg will swallow your vehicle whole. Despite the muskeg, however, summer does have its perks. In the winter we get used to working in the dark – our shortest day is only about 6 ½ hours of sunlight. But in the summer we come to work in the daylight and go home in it too. Sunsets at 11 pm? Yes, please! We can all work our shifts, come home safely and still enjoy the beauty our Canadian summers bring.
Let’s Do Better
Four Health Principles for Our Betterment

by Philip C. Seeger
President and CEO

At Medcor, our services have always been backed by evidence-based medicine. We believe that personal wellness should be approached in the same way – by following health principles that are founded in science and supported by research, that is, by following practices that are shown to effectively lead to good health outcomes.

We’ve identified four things – we call them guiding health principles – that we stand behind and promote. We do not view these principles as a program, plan, or diet. Wellness shouldn’t be something that starts and stops. Rather, we think of these principles as common-sense practices that all of us can integrate into our lives every day so that wellness becomes a lifestyle.

1. Eat Real Food

Natural foods contain the best nutrition for optimal health. Processed foods often contain added ingredients that we are better off without. Avoid food that isn’t fresh. A rule of thumb for determining the best food for you is this: If your food walked (or swam or flew) or grew on the planet, it is real food. If your food has been packaged in bottle, jar, or can, there’s a good chance it does not contain the fresh food that you want to eat.

2. Move Your Body

Our bodies are meant to move! Daily physical activity has innumerable health benefits. Aim for at least 30 minutes of deliberate movement each day. Break up that half hour into shorter increments if needed. Choose something enjoyable and sustainable. Walking is a great place to start. Make a “step goal” and build on it over time.

3. Sleep

Your body needs rest, and it needs seven or more hours every night, depending on your age and health. Improve the length and quality of your sleep by practicing good sleep habits, also called sleep hygiene. Remember that when you’re sleeping, your body is rejuvenating and getting healthful healing that it needs.

4. Mind Your Happiness

What brings you joy? What impedes your happiness? Be mindful of and do things that bring joy to your life. If possible, remove things that cause unneeded stress. It is important to maintain your mental balance – and your happiness.

These four guiding health principles are easy to understand but not always so easy to do. I suggest starting your journey by keeping some sort of record of your daily progress and reflecting on ways you can improve. We can always do better. Let’s encourage each other in this approach to a healthier lifestyle, and let’s do better together. ■
Positive Purpose Equals Positive Health

by Pete Arens, MS, CHES
Wellness Manager

What's purpose got to do with health?

Among the guiding principles that contribute to a healthy lifestyle is the idea of “minding your happiness.” While there are many factors that contribute to a person's happiness and mental wellbeing, having a sense of purpose is one of the foremost, but it is also one that may not be on your health and wellness checklist. When was the last time your physician asked you if you have a strong sense of purpose?

Researchers have associated strong sense of purpose with a number of positive health outcomes. Over 900 seniors were observed during a 4-7 year period in community living centers around Chicago. A greater sense of purpose was associated with a substantially reduced risk of Alzheimer’s and a slower rate of cognitive decline.

A large study (meta-analysis) of over 136,000 people showed that those with a stronger sense of purpose were at lower risk of death and cardiovascular events (heart attack, strokes, etc.). Yet another study showed that those with a higher sense of purpose also slept better.

A growing body of evidence suggests that having meaning and purpose in life is important not only for our happiness, but also for our physical health and overall wellbeing. So how exactly do we increase our sense of purpose?

Victor Strecher, a leading researcher and subject-matter expert has been exploring the answers to this question. He writes in his new book, *Life on Purpose*, “To create a motivating purpose in life, we must each ask ourselves, ‘What matters to me?’ ‘What do I value?’” He offers up a 6-step process to help us answer these questions. The first step begins with a list of basic core values to explore, and then he invites readers to select their top three values and write about why each is important to them.

Some might include:
- Independence
- Community
- Kindness
- Self-Control
- Creativity
- Vitality

The second step is to think about a person or people you would like to emulate. This helps define your own purpose.

Third is to take the “headstone test” as Strecher calls it. Write down the answers to these simple questions: “What would your epitaph be?” and “What would you want people to say about you at your memorial service?”

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Fourth is to ask yourself, “What are the goals in my life that matter the most?” He recommends breaking these down into personal, family, work or school, and community goals that you deeply value.

The fifth step is to assemble your valued goals into an overall life purpose. This is a few sentence summary that puts it all together. He also suggests asking yourself, “Is this purpose bigger than myself?”

The final step is to post your purpose in a place you will see every day. Memorize it and consider sharing it with the people who are close to you.

While discovering and defining your life purpose may seem like a daunting task, it can play an integral role in keeping you happy and healthy. Your doctor may not ask you about your life purpose at your next routine checkup, but exploring it may just be the prescription you are looking for.

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5. Ibid. 56-58.