

Measles, McCarthy, and Reason

Kris King – June 11th 2011

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Every one of us has, at some point in our lives, met someone truly deserving of the label, “gobshite”; someone who, rather like a geography teacher, could speak at great length about nothing in particular. The kind of person who could bang on for hours, like a carpenter with OCD, and never say anything worth listening to. For the most part, we simply tolerate their seemingly limitless capacity for verbal diarrhoea and see it as little more than a minor annoyance – the kind of grating personality trait that we all have and others learn to work around. Occasionally, however, we’d meet a prolific purveyor of bovine faeces that cannot be ignored because they’ve strayed far beyond the realms of the irritatingly harmless and into the territory of the positively lethal; someone who can talk themselves, and those around them, into deep trouble with consummate ease. The kind of person to whom you find yourself saying “seriously, dude, you *need* to shut the fuck up” far too often. If you want a classic example of the “dangerous gobshite”, look no further than Jenny McCarthy.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with [Miss McCarthy](#), she is a former Playboy Playmate, author, former girlfriend of Jim Carrey, and a multi-Razzie award winning actress in such culturally significant works as “Scream 3” and “The Stupids”. She is also a two-times recipient of the Nobel Prize for Medicine and, as such, has written books promulgating lies about the supposed link between the MMR vaccine and autism in children, as well as appearing on talk shows to promulgate lies about the supposed link between the MMR vaccine and autism in children (it should also be noted that she used the talk shows as a platform to promote her books which, as I’ve said, promulgate lies about the supposed link between the MMR vaccine and autism in children).

While I’m happy to admit that I may have made up the thing about the Nobel Prize, I do so while stressing that the rest of what I said was true; Jenny McCarthy *is* a fountain of misinformation and outright lies regarding the supposed link between the MMR vaccine and autism in children. My lie about the Nobel Prize was a way of highlighting the difference between an untruth that, in reality, harms no-one, and the kind of falsehoods that Jenny McCarthy insists on perpetuating, i.e., those that are not only harmful, but potentially deadly. That, and I figured that my talking complete bullshit with absolutely nothing to base it on would help the former Playboy epidemiologist feel like she was in good company.

Insofar as the link between the MMR vaccine and autism goes, there is **no** debate. *There never was*. Andrew Wakefield’s research, which was responsible for sparking this cluster-fuck back when it was first published in The Lancet in 1998, was seen, even at the time, by many professionals to be deeply flawed. A study group of just 12 children should, by itself, be enough to dismiss the findings (given that the sample size is far too small to be considered relevant) but, when you factor in that medical concerns regarding the vaccine were raised *before* the children were given it, and most of the test group weren’t even autistic anyway, you realise that the whole thing should have been treated with the laughable contempt it deserves instead of being allowed to get this far.

That it did actually manage to get this far can be blamed, firstly, on the fact that Wakefield [diddled the data](#) to fit the conclusion he had already decided he wanted. An investigation by Brian Deer showed that [there was an obvious financial agenda](#) at work, and that Wakefield and his colleagues happily cast proper procedure and demonstrable facts to the wind in the pursuit of Nobel Prize fame and fortune. Next up on the wheel of blame are the media who, when given a story that has the extremely emotive combination of children and illness, coupled with the ability to point a finger at an obvious villain (in this case evil scientists who want to damage your children for drug company profits), will take whatever flimsy non-facts they have and run with them until their feet bleed. It doesn’t matter that the data is bullshit because, well, this is all about sick kiddies, damn it!

As soon as this kind of juggernaut has been set in motion, the panic escalates to a point where it becomes almost unstoppable, and the small amount of time Wakefield had bought by presenting baseless findings with a thin veneer of credibility meant that, once the real professionals came out

and start declaring it bollocks, sufficient outrage had been built up to ensure that they looked defensive, and that there just might be a tiny grain of truth to the implication that doctors were putting profit before public health. No matter how much evidence could be gathered to refute the claims, the damage had been done and parents all over the world began waiting anxiously for the first close-to-home report that confirmed their deepest fears. Sadly, for a credulous, pop culture-obsessed population, a celebrity anecdote would do the trick just as well.

Although surgeon general McCarthy isn't particularly well known here in the UK, she has helped maintain the momentum of Wakefield and the media's speeding truck-load of horse manure through her position as the designated figurehead (and empty head) of the gloriously self-righteous, "Won't someone please think of the children!" anti-vaccination movement in the US. This group of grossly ill-informed, crusading jackasses seem to be blissfully unaware that they will likely kill, or at least cause massive harm to, the very children they claim to be protecting by way of their totally wrong-headed and insanely paedocidal campaign of misinformation. And, while the most respected neurologist from "Santa Baby 2: Christmas Maybe" is, as I said, less well-known in the UK, the exposure she has brought to the anti-vaccination lobby in the US has certainly benefited their partners in medical idiocy on this side of the pond.

I've used the word "lies" to describe the misinformation propagated by McCarthy (emeritus professor of genetics on the set of "John Tucker Must Die") and the other fucktards in the anti-vaxx brigade, and I do so with very good reason; *they are completely lacking in any kind of supporting evidence*. Autism, along with many other associated disorders on the spectrum (such as Aspergers Syndrome), occurs overwhelmingly in boys; around 80% of autistics are male, indicating that it has an undeniable underlying genetic cause (current evidence points to a fault in the X-chromosome). You could pump your kid full of every vaccine or drug on earth, line the walls of their nursery with complex maths problems, and sit them down in front of "Rain Man" on an endless loop from the very second they emerge from the womb, and you still won't trigger autism, no matter what these morons claim.

In addition, Dr. Tits McGee contends that autism can be cured, which is like saying that you can cure someone of being black, and that the best method for doing this is chelation therapy. This process is rather like chemotherapy in that it involves stuffing the patient full of nasty poisonous shit and hoping that it kills the problem before it kills the patient (with chelation it's a case of hedging your bets on the treatment doing its thing before the patient has a stroke or a heart attack). McCarthy claimed this was able to cure her son, but experts apparently noted that he was probably suffering from Landau-Kleffner Syndrome, a rare neurological disorder in children which is often misdiagnosed as autism. By the way, if you have a problem with my referring to Jenny McCarthy as "Tits McGee", remember that her field of special expertise is not medicine but exposing herself for money. Just saying.

The tragic upshot of this constant stream of so-called celebrities proffering medical advice when they are criminally unqualified to do so, is that the children of parents who follow it (when they really ought to know better) are at a considerably increased risk of contracting life-threatening diseases that their unprepared immune systems will be unable to fight off. The BBC recently reported that the [Health Protection Agency in the UK is pleading with people to vaccinate their children](#) against measles after seeing an alarming ten-fold spike in the number of reported cases of the potentially fatal viral illness. Other nations too are facing a similar problem, with France, Belgium, Germany, and a number of Scandinavian countries all reporting large increases in cases of measles infection.

For the first few years of their lives children rely on herd immunity to protect them against illnesses that they are too young to be vaccinated against. This is somewhat analogous to putting a baby in the middle of a large crowd of people to protect them from the murderous advances of an axe-wielding maniac. The child couldn't possibly defend itself against a Jason Vorhees or Freddy Krueger on their own, so the crowd acts as a buffer to prevent the danger from getting too close. If you start reducing the size of the crowd, the threat increases dramatically as safety becomes dangerously compromised. Roughly 95% of a community needs to be inoculated in order for herd immunity to work successfully – at present, we're around 92-93%. If, as a parent, you decide not to immunise your kid, remember that it's not just them you're putting at risk – you're endangering *everyone*.

Save The Children announced this week that [the lives of four million children could be saved](#) if only governments would do more to help vaccination programmes, as well as educating people in some of the poorer nations as to why they need to cast off their suspicions about "western medicine" in order that they might save the lives of their children. But what about educating people here in the west?

What's our excuse for ignorance and suspicion? For some, it's the ludicrous belief that the big pharmaceutical companies are engaged in a conspiracy to sell vaccines we don't need in order to stupefy our children and boost profits. While I won't deny that these corporations are, like all others, in the business of making money, they wouldn't be in such a business for very long if the products they were selling simply didn't work.

Science hinges entirely on its ability to get results; if something doesn't work then it's worthless and, over the last three centuries, vaccines have demonstrated time and time again that they work (and they have *mountains* of evidence to prove it). Think of all the diseases, once considered fatal, that have been rendered virtually harmless or, in some cases, wiped out altogether; smallpox, polio, tetanus, tuberculosis, when did you, as presumably someone who lives in the developed world, last know of anyone who even *contracted* one of these diseases, let alone died from one? Nowadays you would have to look to your grandparents, or even your great-grandparents, to find stories of people with polio (for example), and you have vaccines, and the scientists who worked tirelessly to develop them, to thank for that.

No endeavour is entirely without risk, and it would be dishonest of me to suggest that vaccines don't come with possible side-effects. But, when the chances of having your child die from an easily preventable illness can be as low as one in twenty, compared to something in the region of *one in several hundred million* for a fatal, vaccine-related side-effect, the choice is blindingly obvious; **give your kid the fucking shot.** "B..b..but it causes autism!" NO IT FUCKING DOESN'T! The weight of scientific evidence is absolutely against you on this, and I don't give a rat's bollock what Jenny McCarthy says about it either. When you start rejecting medical advice from people who have spent decades specialising in their particular field and instead take it from a self-important, deluded stripper who once fucked Ace Ventura, you should not be allowed to make medical decisions on behalf of a child.

I sometimes wonder whether a lot of the hostility that some parents of autistic children seem to harbour towards medical science in general, and vaccines in particular, stems from a deeply selfish urge to blame someone for the fact that their kid didn't turn out the way they wanted. When someone tells you that you're never going to have the kind of emotional connection with your child that all other parents have with theirs, your first response could very well be to think only of yourself; how it's not fair on **you**, how **you** will have to work *really* hard to look after them, how **you** have been robbed of that bond ... *someone* must be blamed, and *someone must pay!*

If you've ever been in that position, all I can say is get over yourselves, you selfish pricks. Yeah, it might be tough on you, but it's even tougher on the kid because he has to deal with *your* bullshit in addition to his own problems. Not only that, but he'll probably have to cope with you refusing to protect him against potentially lethal diseases because you're too busy blaming some completely unconnected vaccine to give a fuck about his health and well-being.

Pull your head out of your arse and start looking after your child. Stop looking at your autistic kid as a mistake, or as something to find a scapegoat for, and instead try to engage your sense of joy and wonder at having a child who will never have to learn how to lie about liking that horrible sweater they got for christmas, or how to nod and smile politely when trapped in social situations with someone who won't stop talking crap.

Oh, and speaking of which, Jenny McCarthy – seriously, you need to shut the fuck up, you dangerous gobshite ...

