

## Summary of highlights of scientific review of safety datalink information

June 7-8, 2000  
Simpsonwood Retreat Center  
Norcross, Georgia

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A meeting was convened by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to discuss the findings of Dr. Thomas Verstraeten relating to the positive statistical association between Thimerosal-containing vaccines and neurodevelopmental disorders. There were 51 scientists and physicians in attendance, including Dr. Howe of Smith-Kline Beecham, Dr. Guess of Merck, Dr. Blum of Wyeth, and Dr. White of North American Vaccine.

One of the concluding speakers, Dr. Clements on Page 247 concludes: “I am really concerned that we have taken off like a boat going down one arm of the mangrove swamp at high speed, when in fact there was not enough discussion really early on about which way the boat should go at all. ... I know how we handle it from here is extremely problematic. The ACIP (Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) is going to depend on comments from this group in order to move forward into policy, and I have been advised that whatever I say should not move into the policy area because that is not the point of this meeting. ... But that pure science has resulted in splitting the atom or some other process which is completely beyond the power of the scientists who did the research to control it. And what we have here is people who have, for every best reason in the world, pursued a direction of research. But there is now the point at which the research results have to be handled, and even if this committee decides that there is no association and that information gets out, the work that has been done and through the freedom of information that will be taken by others, will be used in ways beyond the control of this group. And I am very concerned about that as I suspect it is already too late to do anything regardless of any professional body and what they say....”

The transcript of this meeting was finally obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, despite the fact that each page of the transcript was stamped “DO NOT COPY OR RELEASE” and “CONFIDENTIAL.”

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