

Editorial

Mercury in vaccines: institutional malfeasance and The Department of Health and Human Services

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Abstract

A historical perspective of the use of Thimerosal, which contains ethylmercury, in vaccines is presented. Despite the availability of evidence that mercurial compounds are toxic, public health institutions have ignored the evidence dating from the 1930s and have instead authorized acceptance of Thimerosal as a so-called “preservative.” Removal of Thimerosal from several childhood vaccines in the United States was not accomplished until after the turn of the century. In its report on Thimerosal, the Institute of Medicine in 2001 commented: “The presence of mercury in some vaccines can raise doubts about the entire system of ensuring vaccine safety, and late recognition of the potential risk of Thimerosal in vaccines may contribute to a perception among some that careful attention to vaccine components has been lacking.”

The CDC has a responsibility to protect the health of the American public. If there were any doubts about the neurological effects of ethylmercury in vaccines on children – and there were substantial doubts – the prevailing consideration should have been how best to protect children from potential harm. However, it appears that protecting the industry’s profits took precedence over protecting children from mercury damage.

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