

Editorial

Being or not being an “activist”, that is the question

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Abstract

Challenging the dominant discourse of physicians is as old as academic medicine. But some health issues seem particularly prone to focus the attention of lay people. This is clearly the case with vaccination where an impressive variety of non-medical contributions have been published. This situation is a godsend for manufacturers and their traditional supporters (governmental agencies, opinion leaders...) as it opens the opportunity for discrediting—under the classical headings of “myth”, “misconception”, “ignorance”, “activism”—any criticism of vaccines quality or vaccination policies, even if it comes from specialists whose skill or expertise is above any suspicion. However, this strategy of “amateurization” (i.e., this strategy by the pharmaceutical industry of undermining the credibility of any criticism as simply reflecting misconceptions of amateurs) regarding vaccine criticism may be easily reversed. In effect, if this is so easy for amateurs to get involved in vaccine controversies, this is because as a whole, the development, assessment and administration of these agents is a shame for the medical world: the weaknesses, contradictions, dissimulations and even lies of most vaccine leaders or governmental “experts” are so gross that they cannot escape the attention even of non medically-trained persons. For health professionals who want to re-direct medicine towards science in the respect of Hippocratic tradition, vaccination appears therefore as a counter-model, a repoussoir (i.e., a perspective attained by the use of illusionary devices) of what happens in practice when academic teaching is driven by financial activism, vested interests, lack of scruples as well as scientific incompetence.

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Conflicts of Interest: Marc Girard, M.D., M.Sc., works as an independent consultant for pharmaceutical industry, including vaccine manufacturers and a number of their competitors.