

AB 2109

Over the last several years California has experienced several outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases (VPD). San Francisco (1) and San Diego (2) had measles, Berkeley(3) and Los Angeles (4) had mumps, and of course the State experienced the largest outbreak of pertussis since 1957 in 2010 with over 9000 cases reported and 10 infant deaths (5). A number of possible causes for these events have been hypothesized such as decreased vaccine efficacy, reduced antigen potency, and waning immunity. At least one of these events (2) was directly attributable to under immunization in a school setting due to large numbers of children who entered school with personal belief exemptions (PBEs) (6). The overall rate of PBEs in schools in California is relatively low at 2.33% in 2010 but there has been a significant increase in the rate from 2000 to 2010 (7). In addition, there is considerable variability in rates across counties and school districts and several have rates between 5% and 15%. (7)

California has one of the most permissive PBE policies in the country and is one of only 20 States that allows broad use of PBEs. (8,9) Parents need only sign a form indicating that they wish not to have their child immunized. We know from national studies that only a small fraction of parents have strong philosophical objections against vaccination, 2-6% or less. (10, 11) Another 10-15% have genuine concerns over safety, discomfort or possible long term

effects of immunization, but are open to education from trusted and knowledgeable individuals. We also know anecdotally that some parents request PBE at the time of school admission out of convenience. Other states have much more stringent requirements for granting exemptions to immunization for school entry. (9) Washington State had a very similar approach to granting PBEs as California until last year when they passed a law requiring parents to have a form signed by their child's PCP that attests to the fact that the parents have received information on the risks and benefits of vaccination. Per anecdotal communication from our Washington colleagues, this requirement has not created a burdensome volume of paperwork.

In our routine job as families' pediatricians, we educate on prevention and illness treatment. Counseling on the benefits and risks of being immunized is part of our daily work. Studies show the value of physicians' influence on families regarding immunization decisions. (10, 11)

This year Assemblymember Richard Pan, MD, FAAP introduced AB 2109, a bill modeled on the Washington State initiative that would require families requesting PBEs to submit a document signed by a health care provider, as specified (MD, DO, NP, PA, naturopathic practitioner or school nurse) attesting to the fact that the family has received information on the benefits and risks of immunizations, as well as the consequences to others in the community should they develop a VPD and expose susceptible individuals. This requirement is unlikely to

deter truly anti-vaccine parents but is likely to convince misinformed parents and those seeking a PBE out of convenience. In fact that has been the early experience in Washington State where the PBE rate dropped significantly statewide since the law went into effect. (12)

Although it continues to be in the daily scope of work for pediatricians - to educate on the benefit and risks of vaccines, working with families who decline vaccines can pose a challenge and hopefully not be further impacted by the passage of this requirement. There are recent Webinars directed towards pediatricians are helpful. To view archived versions go to:

<http://www.vicnetwork.org/category/events/partner-events/archived-events/>

In addition there are multiple credible websites that you give to your parents and caregivers to reference. (See table below).

AB 2109 has passed both houses of the California Legislature and is eligible for signature by the Governor!.It is co-sponsored by the AAP California District IX and the California Immunization Coalition, and supported by CAFP, CMA, and Health Officers Association of California. The lobbying against the bill by the ant-vaccine organizations has been fierce and the bill could still fail to get the Governor's signature. They have argued that physicians would "fire" them from their practices and would refuse to sign the PBE forms. These arguments have carried some weight with some legislators and the governor's office. It is important for pediatricians to remain

engaged with their families even if they have misgivings regarding vaccines. It is also important that pediatricians recognize that they have the greatest influence with regard to convincing parents about the benefits of vaccinating (10), so be confident of that power and use it in your practices. We hope to keep communities healthy and safe for our patients and their families!

Accurate and Reliable Information on Vaccines on the Net

AAP

<http://www2.aap.org/immunization>

CDC's Vaccines and Immunizations

www.cdc.gov/vaccines

CDC's Information for Travelers

www.cdc.gov/travel

National Network for Immunization Information

www.immunizationinfo.org

Every Child By Two

www.ecbt.org

Immunization Action Coalition

www.immunize.org & vaccineinformation.org

Vaccine Education Center of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

www.vaccine.chop.edu

California Department of Public Health, Immunization Branch

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Pages/Default.aspx>

California Immunization Coalition

<http://www.immunizeca.org/vaccine-info>

ImmunizeBC

<http://www.vch.ca/media/ChildhoodImmunizationQuickReferenceKit.pdf>

Shot By Shot

<http://shotbyshot.org>

Books

[Vaccines and Your Child: Separating Fact from Fiction](#) by Paul A. Offit MD and Charlotte A. Moser (Paperback - Feb. 1, 2011)

[Autism's False Prophets: Bad Science, Risky Medicine, and the Search for a Cure](#) by Paul A. Offit (Hardcover - Sept. 22, 2008)

[Deadly Choices: How the Anti-vaccine Movement threatens Us All](#) by Paul Offit (Hardcover-2011)

References

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3. Jamie Applegate Campus Mumps outbreak grows to over 40 suspected and confirmed cases. Daily Californian, October 10, 2011
4. County of Los Angeles Public Health Alert. Increased mumps cases in West Los Angeles County July 6, 2012
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 11. Keane MD, Walter MV, Patel BI, et al. Confidence in vaccination: a parent model. *Vaccine* 2005;23:2486-2493.
 12. Washington State Department of Health News Release May 17, 2012. Available at: http://www.doh.wa.gov/Publicat/2012_news/12-061.htm.