**Forum:** Economic and Social Council

**Issue:** Managing the threat to global health caused by refusing vaccinations

**Student Officer:** Gabriel Faes

**Position:** Former President



**Introduction**

Since the beginning of the century, vaccine hesitancy has become an emerging problem which could cause up to 2 million casualties in 2020 if not stopped (WHO, 2019). Some people have set their minds to think that vaccines have side effects which can be fatal or at least life impairing. This is causing outbreaks of diseases which had been previously eradicated by vaccines, such as measles. This hesitancy is unfounded and it seems people have forgotten what the disease looks like compared to the “risk” these vaccines have, as there is no concrete proof that vaccines do not help and instead harm humans. There are also people in undeveloped countries who cannot receive vaccination and are afraid to receive them since they have no idea what they do due to lack of education.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Vaccine**

A substance (weakened or modified microbe) which stimulates memory cells and antibodies to prepare against the real infection when it comes.

**Anti-Vaxxer (informal)**

A person opposed to taking or giving vaccines to themselves or someone else.

**Issue Overview**

**Historical Background**

**1986:** The United States of America puts in place the National Vaccine Injury Compensation programme which fuels the vaccine hesitancy crisis but also helps the rare people that have problems with vaccines.

**1998:** J. A. Walker and 12 others publish research linking MMR vaccines (the most used type of vaccines) to autism. (Walker, 1998) The research received wide publicity which was the main cause for starting the anti-vaccine movement. Almost immediately after, more research was conducted and refuted the paper making 10 of the 12 co-authors retract their names from the paper. (Sathyanarayana Rao & Chittaranjan, 2011)

**Why People Think Vaccines Are Dangerous**

It is important to state that there are 2 different vaccine hesitancy cases in the world: the ones in developed countries and the ones in undeveloped countries. Both have the same result, death or the spread of diseases, but do not come to that result in the same way.

In developed countries, the problem is that people think the government is lying to them and have forgotten the more detrimental effects some of these diseases have. The research done in 1998 by J. A. Walker (Walker, 1998) was done on only 10 children, but the scientific community inside the anti vaccines population still uses this paper as proof even though it has been refuted multiple times by other research.

If someone is seen to be allergic to a vaccine, it is discovered well before the vaccine is administered and it is never provided. For that person to be safe, at least 19/20 other people need to be vaccinated, something called Herd immunity which could save those with a weakened immune system or with intolerance to a vaccine. (University of Oxford, 2019)

Only 0.001% of people are allergic to vaccines. The other possible dangers of vaccines are genitalia inflammation in 0.0001% of people and encephalitis, being the worst possible case which only happens in 0.0001% of people. (C. Meye, 2004)

 In undeveloped countries, peers can see what the vaccine did (most of the time a small fever) but cannot effectively see real numbers or how it helped the person in avoiding death, even though it indeed did. This causes others to not accept the vaccine because they do not see a purpose to it nor do they want a fever for a few days for “no reason”.

**Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

* **World Health Organization (WHO):** The WHO has declared vaccine hesitancy to be one of the top 10 global threats of 2019 and a global threat worldwide. (WHO, 2019) The organization fights vaccine hesitancy as hard as possible, but it is difficult without direct cooperation from the different governments in the world, mainly the USA (United States of America). The WHO is based in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.
* **The United States of America:** The majority of disease outbreaks and anti-vaccine protests in the developed world have taken place in the United States. Even though it is not the country with the most vaccine hesitancy, it still hosts the majority of protests and propaganda against it.

**Latest Events**

In recent years, there have been multiple outbreaks of diseases that were almost eradicated, such as measles and polio, due to people not vaccinating, most of which did so because they believe it is dangerous for them.

There have been multiple meetings for anti-vaccine people in the past decade, most of them protesting against the government and/or trying to discuss with doctors or between themselves. (Hoffman, 2019)

The problem with this issue is that there has been very little happening on the pro vaccination side, as governments are doing very little and are not helping the WHO and other health organizations.

Recently, vaccine hesitancy is rising around the world, specifically due to the COVID-19 vaccine as people fear that, as it took less time to develop than others, this vaccine is unsafe and ineffective. Conspiracy theorists have spread the idea that these vaccines could possibly contain microchips or other types of tracking devices and have also contributed to the idea that the virus itself is a hoax.

**Possible Solutions**

The most effective solution to this problem is to give information on what vaccines prevent and what the real dangers are and how to protect against them. It is difficult for anyone to see what these diseases did since they do not exist anymore or have few cases to really see effect in the entourage of people. It is extremely important to teach children in schools on both the effects of the disease and effects of the vaccine, and encourage people in general to talk about it on social media as the internet is the number 1 cause of anti-vaccinations in developed countries.

Another solution is to make vaccines mandatory for the whole population, which does have some side effects such as riots, but this can be avoided by communicating the science behind the vaccines to everyone. Less than 10% of the countries in the world require vaccines for the whole population, not one of which is in Africa.

**Useful reference material**

1. YouTube: “Vaccines: How High Is The Risk?”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBkVCpbNnkU>
2. TedTalk: “The power of herd immunity”,
<https://www.ted.com/talks/romina_libster_the_power_of_herd_immunity?utm_source=newsletter_daily&utm_campaign=daily&utm_medium=email&utm_content=image__2015-02-25>

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Hoffman, J. (2019, September 23). *How Anti-Vaccine Sentiment Took Hold in the United States*. Retrieved from The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/23/health/anti-vaccination-movement-us.html>

Sathyanarayana Rao & Chittaranjan, T. S. (2011, April-June). *The MMR vaccine and autism: Sensation, refutation, retraction, and fraud*. Retrieved from National Center for Biotechnology Information: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3136032/>

University of Oxford. (2019, August 29). *Herd immunity (Herd protection)*. Retrieved from Vaccine Knowledge Project: <http://vk.ovg.ox.ac.uk/vk/herd-immunity>

Walker, J. A. (1998, February 28). *RETRACTED: Ileal-lymphoid-nodular hyperplasia, non-specific colitis, and pervasive developmental disorder in children.* Retrieved from Science Direct: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140673697110960>

WHO. (2019). *Ten threats to global health in 2019*. Retrieved from World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/ten-threats-to-global-health-in-2019>

C. Meye, S. R. (2004). *Impfgegner und Impfskeptiker.* Berlin: Springer Medizin Verlag.

**Appendix**

1. <https://ourworldindata.org/exports/Deaths-caused-by-vaccine-preventable-diseases-over-time_v8_850x600.svg>
2. <https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/styles/standalone_image_full_width/public/Chart5.3.png?itok=YWZyaBlU>