



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 7, 2011

Brits Discredit Autism/Vaccine Link Study

In 1998, a study conducted by Andrew Wakefield, a former British surgeon and researcher, and his colleagues was published in *The Lancet*. According to the conclusions of the study, there was a direct connection between the MMR vaccine and autism. However, a new examination of the data reveals that Wakefield may have altered some of the information used in his study to reach his conclusion.



[The Blaze](#) reports:

The conclusions of the 1998 paper by Andrew Wakefield and colleagues was renounced by 10 of its 13 authors and later retracted by the medical journal *Lancet*, where it was published. Still, the suggestion the MMR shot was connected to autism spooked parents worldwide and immunization rates for measles, mumps, and rubella have never fully recovered.

A new examination found, by comparing the reported diagnoses in the paper to hospital records, that Wakefield and colleagues altered facts about patients in their study.

In [February 2010](#), when the *Lancet* retracted the controversial paper that linked the vaccination for measles, mumps, and rubella to autism, Wakefield was found to have acted unethically during the research process.

[CNN](#) wrote, "The General Medical Council, which oversees doctors in Britain, said that 'there was a biased selection of patients in *The Lancet* paper' and that his 'conduct in this regard was dishonest and irresponsible.'"

The most recent analysis of Wakefield's study was conducted by British journalist Brian Deer. *The Blaze* explains:

The analysis, by British journalist Brian Deer, found that despite the claim in Wakefield's paper that the 12 children studied were normal until they had the MMR shot, five had previously documented developmental problems. Deer also found that all the cases were somehow misrepresented when he compared data from medical records and the children's parents.

Paid for by the *Sunday Times* of London and Britain's Channel 4 television network, Deer's analysis was published Thursday in the *British Medical Journal*.

Attached to Thursday's article was an editorial, written by *British Medical Journal's* editor Fiona Godlee. Godlee called Wakefield's study "an elaborate fraud." She also asserts that Wakefield's other research should be heavily scrutinized.



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Wakefield has been so badly discredited that he was stripped of his ability to practice medicine in Britain, particularly as most other published studies have shown no connection between the vaccines and autism.

Despite Wakefield's discrediting, Ginger O'Connor from the Washington County Board of Developmental Disabilities warns, "Be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water." She contends that the number of reported cases of autism have increased without explanation in the 1980s and gained momentum in the 1990s. The Centers for Disease Control continues to investigate the issue further.

While O'Connor is not convinced that there is a connection between the vaccines and autism, she asserts that the possibility should not be completely ruled out. She explains,

What we know about autism, from most researchers, is that there is believed to be some part of [a] genetic component and then there's an environmental hit. And we don't know what that environmental hit is.

A number of medical experts have concluded that there is no link between autism and the vaccines, but they continue to caution against the use of thimerosal, a mercury-based preservative found in many vaccinations. The Food and Drug Administration recommends that thimerosal be removed from the vaccinations.

Earlier this year, the United States "vaccine court" dismissed three cases that attempted to establish a link between the mercury-based immunizations and autism, provoking anger among parents who are convinced of the connection.

TNA's Alex Newman [wrote](#) of the decision:

Critics have accused the hearings of impropriety, citing the fact that the Department of Health and Human Services was a defendant in the case while producing and funding much of the evidence purporting to exonerate the vaccines at taxpayer expense.

According to Newman, there were over 5,000 cases pending before the special court at the time the decision was made.

The court decided overall that there was insufficient evidence connecting cases of autism to the mercury-based preservative thimerosal in the vaccines.

Despite the most recent findings against Wakefield revealed by Deer, Wakefield was unable to be reached for comment. He currently resides in the United States, where he maintains a small but vocal group of supporters.

Photo: Dr. Andrew Wakefield addresses a gathering hosted by the American Rally For Personal Rights in Chicago's Grant Park, May 26, 2010: AP

Images



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