Is There a Connection Between Vaccines and Autism?

DE Brown August 28, 2014

A study published earlier this month on an alleged link between vaccines and autism has been removed from the public domain pending further investigation.

(Newswire.net -- August 28, 2014) -- According to “Translational Neurodegeneration”, an open access journal, a study published earlier this month on an alleged link between vaccines and autism has been removed from the public domain pending further investigation.

Brian Hooker, a scientific adviser for the Focus Autism Foundation and the author of the study, has a 16-year-old son with developmental delays who he said is "vaccine injured."

Author of the study and a biochemical engineer, found that African-American boys who have given the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, known as MMR, before age 24 months were more likely to be diagnosed with autism. To reach this conclusion, Hooker said, he analyzed the same set of data that was the basis for a 2004 study done by researchers at the US CDC (Center for Disease Control).

Hooker said he believes the increased risk for African-American boys he found, was not identified in the CDC study because the researchers, including a senior scientist with the CDC William Thompson, deliberately limited the number of participants they included in their analysis. That, according to Hooker, altered the results of the study. Hooker said that by excluding children without birth certificates, the CDC study results were skewed.

This article was retracted

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RETRACTED: Ileal-lymphoid-nodular hyperplasia, non-specific colitis, and pervasive developmental disorder in children

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Summary

Background
We investigated a consecutive series of children with chronic enterocolitis and regressive developmental disorder.

Methods
12 children (mean age 6 years [range 3–10 years]), 11 boys, were referred to a paediatric gastroenterology unit with a history of normal development followed by loss of acquired skills, including language, together with diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Children underwent gastroenterological, neurological, and developmental assessment and review of developmental records, ileocolonoscopy and biopsy sampling, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), electromyography (EGG), and lumbar puncture were done under sedation. Barium follow-through radiography was done where possible. Biochemical, haematological, and immunological profiles were examined.

Findings
Onset of behavioural symptoms was associated, by the parents, with measles, mumps, and rubella vaccination in eight of the 12 children, with measles infection in one child, and otitis media in another. All 12 children had intestinal abnormalities, ranging from lymphoid nodular hyperplasia to aphthoid ulceration. Histology showed patchy chronic inflammation in the colon in 11 children and reactive ileal lymphoid hyperplasia in seven, but no granulomas. Behavioural disorders included autism (nine), disintegrative psychosis (one), and possible postviral or vaccine encephalitis (two). There were no focal neurological abnormalities and MRI and EEG tests were normal. Abnormal laboratory results were significantly raised urinary methylnalonic acid compared with age matched controls (p<0.002), low haemoglobin in four children, and a low serum IgA in four children.
However, Thompson went on to say that Hooker had recorded their conversations without his consent, and had posted them online without his knowledge.

According to Dr. Hooker, the study is not so new, as it is based on data from 2010 and is basically a rehash of a “fraudulent” study published then. The debate over whether autism spectrum disorders are caused by vaccines started when researcher Andrew Wakefield published a now-retracted study in journal The Lancet in 1998 that linked the MMR vaccine to autism.

Most of Wakefield's co-authors withdrew their names from the study when they learned Wakefield had been compensated by a law firm intending to sue manufacturers of the vaccine in question. In 2010, Wakefield lost his medical license. Following year, The Lancet, retracted the study after an investigation found Wakefield altered or misrepresented information on the 12 children who were the basis for the conclusion of his study.

The new study by Hooker has been publicized by groups like Focus Autism, which say vaccines have contributed to the "current autism epidemic and rise of chronic illness in children." Hooker said his results raise more questions than answers and pointed to the need for additional studies.

The advocacy group Autism Speaks, which declined to comment on Hooker's study, referred CNN to its "Vaccine and Autism" statement, which says:"We strongly encourage parents to have their children vaccinated for protection against serious disease. We recognize that some parents still have concerns about vaccines, particularly if they have a child or relative with autism. We urge them to find a health practitioner who will consider their concerns and help them ensure the well-being of their child."
According to The National Network for Immunization Information, the definition of autism has changed substantially in years of study. Indeed, many authorities believe that the increased incidence of autism is largely due to this fact. The NNII quoted the results of Stehr-Green and colleagues study published in 2003 which adds to the evidence that thimerosal-containing vaccines do not cause autism or similar disorders.