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Flu Jabs Could be a Waste of Time

This article, and several others on the same subject, were initiated because of a report appearing in the October 28, 2006 issue of the prestigious British Medical Journal (BMJ). In the BMJ report, Dr. Tom Jefferson notes that many studies on flu vaccinations were of poor quality and showed evidence of bias.

Dr. Jefferson is the coordinator of the vaccines section of the Cochrane Collaboration, an independent group that reviews research and tests its validity. According to the Telegraph article Dr. Jefferson has analyzed the best available evidence showing the impact of vaccination on the population. He states, "I am interested in the gap between evidence and policy. I have looked at the facts. All I can say is that I have not found the evidence." After an extensive review of scientific studies available on Flu vaccinations, Dr. Jefferson found that up to the age of two, infants were no better off getting the vaccination than getting a placebo. Likewise, he also found that there was little evidence of benefit for older children as well. Contrary to common vaccination recommendations he could not find enough evidence of benefit for people with chronic chest problems, asthma and cystic fibrosis. The report even points out the lack of consistent evidence in elderly populations. Dr. Jefferson noted the wide swing in statistics and attributes this inconsistency to biased reporting and inconsistencies in surveillance. In healthy populations, the BMJ report showed no evidence of need for Flu vaccine. The evidence showed among healthy people under 65 who received a flu vaccination, there was no effect on possible hospital stay, time off work, or death from influenza and its complications.

Dr. Jefferson's report calls into question the aggressive vaccination policies and recommendations. The report noted, "The large gap between policy and what the data tell us (when rigorously assembled and evaluated) is surprising." In concluding his report, Dr. Jefferson remarks on the common fear spread about Flu predictions which commonly make the general press and send masses scurrying to get their shots, "The optimistic and confident tone of some predictions of viral circulation and of the impact of inactivated vaccines, which are at odds with the evidence, is striking."

As a side note, 28 news outlets reported on this finding from the BMJ. It is interesting to note that no mainstream US news outlets covered the story and only 3 news publications of any kind in the US even carried this story.