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Up to 1-in-50 Troops Seriously Injured ... By Vaccines?

By David Kirby - 8-14-08

US Department of Defense: 1-2% of individuals may experience severe vaccine effects that "could result in disability or death."

American Academy of Pediatrics: 2+ % of children have "defects" that cause vaccine "risks"

On August 5th, the President of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. Renee Jenkins, made a rather puzzling comment on *Good Morning America*, during a segment on vaccine safety and the risk of autism.

Dr. Jenkins said that, "97-plus percent of children don't have these kinds of defects, and so when you look at what the (vaccine) risk is to children, and then what the benefits are, the benefits far outweigh the risks that occur."

Many observers, myself among them, were startled by the comments. But due to awkward editing, it was left entirely unclear as to what Dr. Jenkins meant by "defects," and what sort of vaccine-related "risks" threatened the remaining two-plus percent of children.

Some in the autism community took the statement to mean that at least 2 percent of children (or 1-in-50) were somehow genetically destined ("defective" is such an ugly term) to be at-risk for serious vaccine injuries.

I didn't believe it. It was inconceivable to me that any pediatrician would so nonchalantly find it acceptable that somewhere between 1-in-50 and 1-in-33 children faced such severe risks. Certainly, Dr. Jenkins had misspoken.

So I emailed the AAP and, sure enough, they assured me that Dr. Jenkins had never intended to use the word "defects." Instead, I was told, she was referring to certain susceptibilities that some infants might have to very mild side effects - such as temporary fever, or localized pain or swelling.

The AAP official I spoke with said studies had shown that less than 3% of children encounter such non-serious side effects.

So I published this account on the ["Age of Autism"](#) blog, where I concluded that, "some people may not accept this explanation, but I do."

Well, a lot of people did not accept the explanation. Some insisted that Dr. Jenkins was not talking about minor side effects: She had been asked a question about vaccines and autism.

I called ABC and spoke with a producer who had worked on the segment. She confirmed that the question Dr. Jenkins had been asked was this: "Do you completely dismiss any connection between autism and vaccines?"

In other words, Dr. Jenkins was not speaking about mild side effects at all.

So I emailed the AAP once again, for a little further clarification. Did Dr. Jenkins stand by her original contention that she was actually talking about susceptibilities, and not "defects?" And were the "risks" she mentioned really related to simple pain and swelling, when the question posed to her was about autism?

It didn't make sense. And it still doesn't.

Which brings us to the military.

Following the Jenkins remarks, one parent directed me to a report, prepared last year by the [Government Accountability Office](#), that contained this rather surprising statement:

"Officials from the VHC (the Department of Defense's Vaccine Healthcare Centers) Network and CDC estimate that between 1 and 2 percent of immunized individuals may experience severe adverse events, which could result in disability or death. Some of these events may occur coincidentally following immunization, while others may truly be caused by immunization"

I had never heard of the VHC, so I went to their website, where I found [this Power Point presentation](#), and this slide in particular: [Download file](#)

This slide suggests many things to me. Namely:

- 1) Some 10.4 million service members, DoD employees and their beneficiaries (including children) have been vaccinated.
- 2) Up to 2%, or 1-in-50 service members (and it looks like DoD employees and beneficiaries as well - though I have yet to confirm this) have sustained "serious" adverse vaccine reactions, including disability and death.
- 3) Among active duty and reserve service members, up to 48,000 individuals may have sustained serious vaccine injuries which might need to be classified as "casualties."
- 4) These vaccine-related disabilities are often severe, and may require teaching "new skills" to the injured.

At first, I thought the injury rates might be so high because of the anthrax and smallpox vaccines. But military studies on both shots claimed that they were extremely safe. (For

example, there were only 140 reports of inflamed heart muscle following smallpox vaccination, out of 1.2 million service members vaccinated).

But then I read that the possible cause of so much injury, for service members at least, was "multiple vaccines" or "drugs + vaccines," according to the VHC slide.

I wrote to the VHC, and to the GAO, seeking more information on these data, but did not receive any replies (so far, although I will be happy to update this column if I do).

The questions raised by this, by other slides in the series, and within the GAO report, are numerous. They could have serious implications for the military, and for the population at large. Here is what I asked the two agencies (GAO and VHC):

What, exactly, were the serious side effects found in the population?

What information is there on the impact of these effects, in terms of medical discharges, relocation and reassignments, teaching of "new skills," treatments, veteran care, etc?

Of those service members injured, how many did not return to active duty or reserve assignments, and what impact, if any, is this having on our military?

What are the financial costs of training troops who may no longer be able to serve due to vaccine injuries?

If the 1-2% rate for serious side effects is the same for all 10.4 million DoD personnel and their beneficiaries, does that mean there have been 100,000-200,000 serious side effects within the DoD system?

The GAO said that some service members who received anthrax or smallpox vaccines experienced severe reactions such as the onset of diabetes and multiple sclerosis. How rare were these events and why don't they show up in the safety data?

Why does DoD believe that adverse events effecting up to 1 in 50 people are "rare?"

Is DoD stating that vaccines can cause diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome and autoimmune disorders, however rare?

DoD says that possible risk factors for severe adverse events include "multiple vaccines." So why does the AAP and CDC say this is not a risk factor for infants?

DoD also says that gender and ethnicity may be risk factors as well. What evidence, if any, is available to support this?

One slide says that the "ever expanding" number of CDC-recommended vaccines is one of several "complex immunization exposures" to be considered - Could the DoD elaborate on that?

DoD says that "travel vaccines mixed in new ways" also need to be considered. What impact might they be having?

The military says that people who have adverse reactions to a vaccine may be exempted from further doses. Why doesn't the American Academy of Pediatrics adopt this approach as well?

If the rate of serious vaccine effects in this population is 1-2%, what is the rate in the general population?

Is autism more common in military families than the general population? (Some anecdotal reports, at least, estimate the rate at about 1-in-80 children of US military personnel).

These seem like sensible questions to me. But I am not sure anyone will get any answers that are any more sensible than those coming out of the AAP.

Dr. Jenkins spoke about 2-plus percent of children with "defects" putting them at risk for vaccine injury. Is that the same 1-2 percent risk found by the military? I have no idea.

But I did look up the rates for mild side effects from some common childhood vaccines. Many of them were much higher than the "2-plus" percent cited by Dr. Jenkins

The diphtheria -- tetanus-pertussis vaccine, for instance, carries a 25% risk for fever, 25% for localized redness or swelling, and 25% for soreness or tenderness where the shot was given. Haemophilus influenzae type b (HiB) vaccine causes redness, warmth, or swelling where the shot was given in up to 25% of children, and fever over 101 degrees Fahrenheit in up to 1 out of 20 children.

Which leads me to believe, sadly, that I defended Dr. Jenkins prematurely. It would appear the AAP President is either misinformed, or not telling the whole truth.

But we will never know. This afternoon, the AAP wrote to me to say they would have no further comment on Dr. Jenkins's appearance on *Good Morning America*.