

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT VACCINATING YOUR CHILDREN AND TEENS—2 LOCAL CASES

Submitted by Dr. Theresa D'Amato, Pediatric Hospitalist, Lancaster General Hospital

In Pennsylvania we have a high quality health care system and wide availability of immunization programs, yet the commonwealth has among the lowest vaccination rates in the country. Our most recent report shows that only 86 percent of children entering kindergarten here have the necessary vaccinations compared with roughly 95 percent in the rest of the country. This is a quote from the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

As a full-time Pediatrician for over 21 years who specializes in hospitalized children at Lancaster General Hospital, I feel it essential to notify the Lancaster County community of 2 recent very serious cases of vaccine-preventable illnesses. Both children were infants who had never received any vaccines. They were baby girls who had very high fevers, were found to have bacterial meningitis (one with Haemophilus influenza bacteria, the other with Streptococcus pneumoniae bacteria), and had to spend 14 days in LGH receiving intravenous (IV) antibiotics. They were unable to go home with an IV because they were too young/small to have a PICC line (long-term IV) inserted, and they were too ill to be safely discharged. They could easily have died if the parents had waited any longer to bring them to the hospital or if the correct antibiotics were not available and given very quickly. Both babies were very contagious to those around them (older children and adults can get meningitis too), and both have a high possibility of hearing or learning deficits now or in the future.

These cases are not just occurring in communities without easy access to a hospital or in developing countries. Please read about these and other serious consequences of not vaccinating your child, and please reconsider—for your child's sake and for the rest of your family and community.

For further reading—by an eminent Infectious Disease Specialist at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Offit, Paul MD. Vaccines and Your Child: Separating Fact from Fiction, 2011

Offit, Paul MD. Deadly Choices: How the Anti-Vaccine Movement Threatens Us All, 2012

Offit, Paul MD. Bad Faith: When Religious Belief Undermines Modern Medicine, 2015

Also, an excellent website for Parent and Physicians go to [www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center](http://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center).

Dr. Theresa D'Amato  
Pediatric Hospitalist  
Lancaster General Hospital  
555 N. Duke Street  
Lancaster, PA 17602