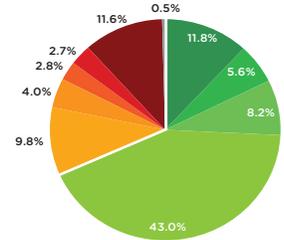




COMMUNICATIONS BREAKDOWN

We received close to 1,000 letters and Web comments about our November cover story, and 70 percent of the notes agreed with us. Here's a taxonomy of who wrote in and what they said:



PRO

- Medical professionals
- People with autism or with a family member on the autism spectrum
- Parents without autistic kids
- Other

CON

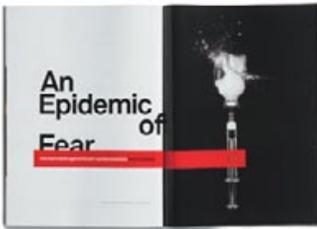
- People who believe vaccines = autism
- Parents who believe their children were injured by vaccines
- People who suggested we were paid off by Big Pharma
- People who believe vaccines are unnecessary
- Other
- Neutral or undecided

RE: Epidemic of Fear

Well, *that* struck a nerve. We got more mail about our cover story, “An Epidemic of Fear,” than any other piece we’ve published. Dozens of medical professionals commended Amy Wallace’s feature on the fallacies promulgated by the anti-vaccine movement. Meanwhile the anti-vaxers flooded our mailboxes with stories of children injured by vaccinations, chain letters, misogynistic rants, threats, and just plain crazytown (“Sodomite editors should go get AIDS at the Folsom Street Fair,” advised one less-evolved creature). Sticks and stones: We’re still vaccinating our kids, and we hope you will, too.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE rants@wired.com

The War on Science



Amy Wallace’s excellent piece (“An Epidemic of Fear,” issue 17.11) isn’t really even about vaccines. It’s about what Thomas Friedman calls the American “dumb as we wanna be” attitude,

which combines stunning intellectual laziness, the erroneous concept that all information is equal, and the Internet to create a witches’ brew that we’re using to commit national suicide. The vaccine debate is just the tip of the iceberg: The same mentality has led to catastrophic stasis on climate change and health care reform.

Auden Schendler
Basalt, Colorado

Thank you for your meticulous report on the challenges of telling the truth about vaccines

to parents. Parents deserve to have their questions answered as fully and authoritatively as possible. Unfortunately, pediatricians find families confused and frightened by the misinformation that is so widespread in the media. Your report will help dispel some of the myths about vaccines and autism, and may calm some parents’ fears.

Judith S. Palfrey, MD, FAAP
President, American Academy of Pediatrics
Elk Grove Village, Illinois

I am outraged by this article. I did not vaccinate my children, and I am an educated, intelligent woman. This is a personal decision about my children’s health, and I did what I felt best. That is my right. I don’t see how my choice can threaten others. If vaccines are so safe and effective, then my decision does not put your children at risk. Until drug companies prove they are trustworthy, I’ll do what I feel is best for my family.

Excerpted from a comment posted on Wired.com by
MEGHANSKI

THANK YOU FOR THE GLIMPSE INTO THE CRINGE-INDUCING WORLD OF TIM AND ERIC. THEY BLOW AWAY ANYONE ELSE IN TV SKETCH COMEDY TODAY.

Excerpted from a comment posted on Wired.com by GLEBOVITZ



EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE rants@wired.com

THE RIGHT SHOT



The image of an exploding vial accompanying our "Epidemic of Fear" story was no Photoshop job. Photographer Andrew Zuckerman fired an air rifle at milk-filled glass vials (since he couldn't get any actual vaccine) to create the image. "Photographing a controlled explosion requires patience, the right tools, and safety goggles," says Zuckerman, whose latest collection of photographs is titled *Bird*. All in all, he fired at close to 150 vials. "The day was loud and dangerous," Zuckerman says. "Full of flying glass and spilled milk."

I am a family doctor in Tennessee, and I have an 11-year-old with autism. I fight every day to encourage kids and adults to get immunized, while doing all I can to help my son find a place in the world. This debate shows a basic lack of scientific knowledge in the US today, and the Jenny McCarthys of the world need to be called on their bullshit. When she says, "My son is my science," the immediate response should be that no science is based on a study group of one.

Kirk A. Nienaber, MD
Henry, Tennessee

A friend's son received six vaccinations at the age of 14 months. Within 24 hours, he was experiencing 200 seizures a day. This was a healthy, normal child prior to that day. Tell that mother there is no causation. My daughter had her first epileptic seizure within 72 hours of receiving the MMR vaccine. Correlation? Yes. Causation? Unknown. Because there are few answers to "why" for diagnoses of autism and epilepsy, parents are left to wonder.

Robin Pennell
San Diego, California

Thank you for your article. I am autistic, and I am sick of the anti-vaccine movement. They waste time and money that could go toward helping autistics. I'd love to see Jenny McCarthy be as passionate about job training, respite care, social skill classes, and providing communication devices to poor families as she is about spouting anti-vaccine lies. It would be nice to see Generation Rescue replace its dangerous practice of promoting chelation with the practice of promoting proven safe treatments. Hopefully your article has gotten more people to understand how destructive the anti-vaccine movement is.

Brandy Nichole Wilson
Virginia Beach, Virginia



I did not immunize my child, because I worry vaccinations can alter our children's brains. I have never feared that the diseases we are vaccinated for are life-threatening because we do not live in a third-world country and we have access to excellent medical care.

Jan Neiges
Westcliffe, Colorado

I am old enough to remember a measles outbreak at my elementary school. Two kids never came back: One died and the other suffered severe brain damage. No way could my kids have evaded their vaccinations.

Anneliese Bowman
Socorro, New Mexico

Vaccines are a public health issue. One of my sons cannot get the seasonal or H1N1 vaccines due to his egg allergy and history of respiratory illness. So it's up to us, his family, to all get vaccinated so that we form our own little wall of immunity for him. It's unfortunate that I can't count on others in the community to do the same. And by the way, my other son has autism.

Nhu-Uyen Khuong
Whippany, New Jersey

Autism symptoms typically show up around 18 to 24 months of age, whether or not the child is vaccinated. I'm truly sorry for those parents. Believe me: My daughter is autistic. She showed signs early, and her vaccinations were after thimerosal was discontinued in routine childhood vaccinations. It is my firm belief that it is genetic. Even if there was a slight risk of autism from vaccination (which I don't believe), I'd rather have an autistic child than grieve that child.

Excerpted from a comment posted on Wired.com by
STUDIOFIX

Science has gone past the point of reason, creating vaccines for diseases that aren't true threats. Chicken pox? Rotavirus? The seasonal flu? These illnesses are treatable, and aside from the minuscule risk of death, carry no lasting health implications. We don't need these vaccines in the US. Forty deaths a year from rotavirus, while tragic, does not constitute a serious health risk.

Danielle Dehmler-Buckley
Denver, Colorado

UNDOS

The Texas Advanced Supercomputing Center has 579.4, not 504, teraflops; the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne is in Switzerland, not France ("The Biggest Digital Brains," Start, issue 17.11). Thimerosal was removed from the majority of vaccines in 2001, but it is still present in some versions of the flu and DTaP shots ("An Epidemic of Fear," issue 17.11).