

The Biggest Price of Vaccine Hesitancy

Reading the 6/17/26 Connecticut Post article “First Case of Measles in 2026 Confirmed: State Officials,” I thought about Michael Antonetti’s letter to the M/O Times of 6/4/26, “Personal Choice Comes with Responsibility,” in which he makes the economic case that “Those who opt out of safe and effective vaccinations should be the ones to bear the cost of the additional risks of that decision.” I agree. But the Post reminded me that there’s a much greater cost to abandoning vaccinations than the one measured in dollars and cents.

Connecticut has become the 39th state to suffer from measles of late, perhaps from its proximity to New York City, which is experiencing an outbreak. According to the Post, “...measles is a highly contagious disease that can spread quickly through air when an infected person coughs or sneezes... A typical case of measles begins with mild to moderate fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes (conjunctivitis) and sore throat... three to five days after the start of these symptoms, a red or reddish brown rash, usually starting on a person’s face at the hairline and spreading downward to the entire body... a person’s fever may spike to more than 104 degrees Fahrenheit.”

Awful as this sounds, the consequences of yellow fever, meningitis, whooping cough, dengue fever, malaria, diphtheria, mumps, cervical cancer and polio spreading globally as the diseases infect unvaccinated hosts, can be more devastating. The commissioner of our state Department of Health says “...that vaccination continues to be the best way to protect against measles,” and later “... being vaccinated helps us all.”

Preventing these diseases would be the most effective cost solution, but the U.N. World Health Organization tells us that “Recent funding cuts have caused ‘severe disruptions’ to health services in almost three-quarters of all countries,” and that “across 108 countries... nearly half are experiencing moderate to severe disruptions to vaccination campaigns, routine immunizations and supply chains due to failing donor support.” Parenthetically, on January 23, 2026, President Trump, whose Secretary of Health and Human Services is a long-time anti-vaccine activist, signed executive order 14155, effectively withdrawing America from the WHO.

Paul Alexander spent more than 70 years in an iron lung that pumped air into his polio-shattered breathing muscles. Imagine the cost of his health services. Add to this the price of treating all the millions of victims of preventable diseases. Astronomical as that may be, imagine how unnecessary Alexander’s horrific suffering would have been had he been able to access a safe, effective, affordable preventative. Immunization has spared 150 million lives in the past 50 years, useless, pointless torment and grief.

There is no question that science-based, time-tested vaccines are affordable and effective while treating disease and its aftermath can be exorbitant and often not successful. Immunization does save money. It saves lives and improves the quality of life for millions. Include also in its list of benefits the peace of mind that comes from knowing that you and those you care about are protected. Ask anyone who has ever suffered needlessly.

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