



## Dissatisfied Parents Together (DPT)

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### VACCINE MANUFACTURERS' MEMOS AND NEW BOOK SHOW PERTUSSIS VACCINE NOT BEING TESTED FOR SAFETY: PARENTS DEMAND A CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATION

Internal documents obtained from vaccine manufacturers' files were released to Congress on February 7 demonstrating that manufacturers have known for at least 20 years that the federal safety test for the whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine does not measure its ability to cause brain damage and death in children. Further evidence that the vaccine is causing more injuries than admitted by manufacturers, government health agencies, and the medical community was revealed in a new book DPT: A Shot in the Dark by Coulter and Fisher, published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Lawyers from Advocates for a Safe Vaccine released the previously undisclosed company memos at a time when Congress is considering vaccine safety and compensation legislation. U.S. manufacturers and the American Medical Association (AMA) have argued that vaccine producers and doctors should be exempt from liability for injuries caused by any mandated childhood vaccines which have passed federal safety tests. Sidney McMath, former Governor of Arkansas and spokesman for Advocates for a Safe Vaccine, called for stricter federal regulation of vaccines and continued product liability for manufacturers, charging that "the production of a less toxic vaccine is and has been economically and technologically feasible for at least 20 years."

Pertussis  
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AAP Poster Proven Inaccurate

An AAP poster made available to the Academy's 28,000 pediatrician members in June 1985 warns that if the U.S. did not use the pertussis vaccine "today almost 500,000 children could fall victim to pertussis. Over 14,000 cases would end in death." In a letter to pediatricians, a former AAP president said the poster had "been reviewed by the appropriate Academy committee members" and urged physicians to hang it up in their waiting rooms.

At an immunization advisory committee meeting of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta in October, 1985, Oklahoma DPT leader Karen Cline, Pennsylvania DPT leader Judy Glomb, and Leslie Chapman, of Georgia, whose babies died following pertussis vaccine reactions, asked an AAP official at the meeting: "In the peak year of the English whooping cough epidemic, there were 23 deaths. Dr. Hinman (of the CDC) tells us to expect about 400 deaths per year in the U.S. in the absence of pertussis vaccine. [The] American Academy of Pediatrics warns us of 14,000 [deaths]! Please explain this discrepancy to us." The AAP official, who heads the AAP's Committee on Infectious Diseases, answered, "I don't know the origin of those figures."

In a Jan. 14, 1986 response to the mothers' inquiries, CDC assistant director for public health practice Jeffrey Koplan, M.D., stated, "We have spoken with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) about their estimate of 14,000 deaths from pertussis... The Academy acknowledges that this is an erroneous number ... The AAP poster containing this projection has been recalled." But, to date, the AAP has not notified its 28,000 members of the error, and the posters still appear in many

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pediatricians' offices throughout the U.S.

AAP Press Release Found Misleading

AAP officials followed up this poster with a Nov. 5, 1985 press release entitled "Fear of Vaccine Tied to Alarming Rise in Whooping Cough - Ten Outbreaks Result in Disability and Death." In this national press release, the AAP's president Martin Smith, M.D., alleged that the outbreaks were "an indication that the public's confidence in the DTP vaccine has slipped to unacceptable levels" and that "parents may be delaying immunizations because of recent publicity about the vaccine's safety." The release stated, "During the past year alone, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Oregon and three counties in Texas reported near-epidemic cases of whooping cough that have resulted in hospitalization, brain damage and even death."

But a three month investigation by DPT vice-president Barbara Loe Fisher revealed that the AAP press release was misleading and inaccurate. After telephone calls and follow-up correspondence with health department officials in the eight states listed in the AAP press release, Fisher found that on the basis of 1985 reports to date in these eight states:

- o three (Hawaii, Indiana, and Oklahoma) had fewer pertussis cases in 1985 than in 1984;
- o there was one suspected pertussis death of a 1 month old that occurred in late-November 1985 (after the date of the AAP release) and was reported in 1986, but health authorities are still trying to confirm the cause of death;
- o there was one suspected case of permanent damage from pertussis, which health authorities are also still trying to confirm;
- o out of 583 pertussis cases two months of age or older with a known vaccination status, 381 or 65% had received one or more DPT shots.



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Fisher, who is also co-author of the book DPT: A Shot in the Dark, said, "There was one unconfirmed death and one unconfirmed case of permanent damage due to the disease reported to date in these eight states in 1985, which makes the tone and inaccuracies in the AAP press release a shocking example of misleading information being given to the public on this subject. Whooping cough is not a disease to be taken lightly, and what is really disturbing about these figures is that they indicate that pertussis is occurring in a vaccinated population. In most states where alleged epidemics occurred, they appear to be largely due to improved reporting of the disease, not true increases in the actual number of cases. It looks like recent publicity about the vaccine's safety is generating more active reporting of whooping cough."

CDC officials estimate whooping cough may be underreported by as much as 10 to 20 times in America, which means that there actually may be 10,000 to 60,000 cases of whooping cough per year in the U.S. instead of the 1,000 to 3,000 cases reported. If doctors in a state start looking for pertussis and reporting it, said Fisher, that state could appear to be having an increase when it is really just a matter of better reporting of pertussis that has always been there.

Although the U.S. has a 95 percent vaccination rate, the current vaccine is estimated to be only 63 to 94 percent effective and immunity is thought to last only two to five years. Vaccinated children and adults can have whooping cough and sometimes only exhibit symptoms similar to those of a bad cold or flu. They can infect others, especially vulnerable newborns. The

vaccine is thought to be too reactive to be given to children past the age of seven.

In the five states that showed pertussis increases in 1985 - Iowa (33 cases), Oregon (48 cases), Georgia (110 cases), Minnesota (138 cases), and Texas (354 cases through 12/7/85) - DPT was provided with evidence of only one cluster of 9 cases in one state to support the AAP's claim that increases were due to parents not vaccinating their children because of fear of pertussis vaccine reactions. In fact, DPT's investigation revealed that the alleged "near epidemics" in 1985 in the five states closely resembled alleged epidemics reported in Oklahoma in 1983 and Washington in 1984.

A DPT analysis of 237 out of 330 pertussis cases reported in Oklahoma in 1983 found that 69% of the cases with a known vaccination status had been vaccinated with one or more DPT shots, and 41% of those had been appropriately vaccinated for their age. There were no reported cases of death or brain damage due to the disease in Oklahoma in 1983. A CDC report, which was published in the CDC's Jan. 13, 1984 Morbidity & Mortality Report (MMWR), stated that a health survey conducted in the state found that "Concern about the adverse effects of pertussis vaccine was not cited as a reason for nonvaccination."

In 1984, 162 pertussis cases were reported in the Seattle-King County area of Washington state. Again, there were no deaths or cases of brain damage reported, and 49% of the cases aged 3 months to 6 years had been appropriately vaccinated for their age with DPT. In the July 5, 1985 MMWR, the CDC stated that the "peak in reported cases" coincided with "the institution of aggressive active surveillance" of whooping cough in the area.

Schwartz said, "DPT is not advising parents not to have their

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children vaccinated. We are as concerned about preventing death and brain damage from whooping cough as preventing death and brain damage from vaccine reactions. We are for safer and more effective vaccines, and we are for correct information being given to parents. The AAP leadership should use valid information and not scare tactics to help parents make informed choices about the vaccine."

Background Information on Dissatisfied Parents Together

Based in the Vienna, Virginia suburb of Washington, D.C., Dissatisfied Parents Together (DPT) is a national, non-profit, educational organization founded in 1982. The organization is largely composed of parents whose children have been killed or brain damaged by DPT shot reactions. DPT is not anti-vaccine but is committed to: (1) promoting the development of a more effective and less reactive pertussis vaccine; (2) educating parents and physicians about whooping cough and the vaccine to prevent unnecessary vaccine injuries; and (3) working to establish a vaccine injury compensation system (S. 827) that will institute safeguards in the vaccine system and provide fair and adequate compensation for families of children injured or killed by vaccine reactions. DPT has been particularly critical of the lack of accurate benefit-risk statistics on childhood vaccines because physicians are required to report diseases, but are not required to report vaccine reactions.

Parents may obtain a parent information booklet on whooping cough and the pertussis vaccine by sending a \$3 donation to DPT, 128 Branch Rd., Vienna. Va., 22180. DPT: A Shot in the Dark (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1985; & Warner Communications, 1986) provides historical, medical, political, legal, and case history information on whooping cough and the pertussis vaccine.