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OPEN LETTER

Dear Alan Johnson

An appeal for honest measles data

It has just made the news headlines that there were 28 or 36 cases of measles in Scotland last year. Information about this has been released in an apparently misleading way to suggest that it is related to failure to vaccinate:

"There have been 36 reported cases, 28 of which have been confirmed by Health Protection Scotland (HPS.)

"The majority of the cases involved children under 16 years of age who have not received a complete course of the MMR vaccine." [1]

This information has in itself little meaning. Even within the schedule children under 15 months will have had no vaccine, and children under school age will also not have "completed the course", but all we know about these children is that they were under 16. So this report is entirely compatible with the children being up to date with vaccines according to age. The report did not say that the children had not met the schedule.

An earlier BBC report disclosed:

"The number of confirmed measles cases has risen from 56 in 1998 in England and Wales to just under 1,000 in 2007, according to provisional data.

"However, the impact of MMR on these figures is not clear." [2]

But it is also far from clear whether measles incidence is increasing or whether we have a few more reports. A European survey for 2001-2 admitted that for most countries the data was incomplete:

"With a few exceptions, total numbers reported are likely to be incomplete. This report contains incidence data that have to be interpreted cautiously because of under-reporting." [3]

The fact that 8 of the Scottish cases are unconfirmed, suggests that surveillance is anything but thorough, and potential for discovering greater numbers because the issue has been highlighted, or for political reasons, is considerable. On the other hand it no longer seems from the Danish report that that measles represents a significant threat to mortality in the developed world. While according to National Statistics [see [figure](#)] measles mortality had collapsed to about 1% of the numbers at the turn of the last century by the time vaccination was introduced in 1968, by the beginning of this century it was almost invisible:

out of 17, 928 reports in the Danish study measles was only tentatively implicated in a single death:

"in the UK measles may have been a contributory factor in the death of an adult with severe lung disease who was confirmed as having the infection". [3]

The position is similar in the US. Earlier this year the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Renee Jenkins, was moved to write to ABC television about a legal drama relating to vaccination:

"Many people trust the health information presented on fictional television shows, which influences their decisions about health care. In the United Kingdom, erroneous reports linking the measles vaccine to autism prompted a decline in vaccination and the worst outbreak of measles in two decades, including the deaths of several children." [4]

But while the deaths of several children in the UK due to the decline in vaccination was in itself a complete fiction, it is also worth noting that Dr Jenkins was unable to cite any deaths in the US with a population five times the size, and probably many more unvaccinated children than in the UK.

On the other hand, while presently we have had no deaths attributable to failing MMR uptake we certainly have deaths attributable to MMR. A search of the official US register of adverse vaccine reactions, VAERS, brings up a total of 182 deaths associated with MMR [5]. While this is likely to be a small fraction of the true numbers the US does not, at least, subscribe to our official fantasy in this country that there are no deaths at all. Lucy Johnston reported in the Sunday Express in January 2002 26 families that attribute the death of a child to MMR, 8 of which appear to have been medically recognised [6].

However, one thing the Government has admitted in a Freedom of Information disclosure is that some of the identified cases of measles are known to be of the vaccine strain, although information has not been made available about the likely extent of this.

It is interesting to note the disproportionate concern over this matter by the Department of Health and the Health Protection Agency. The 36 children who had measles last year in Scotland were most likely long ago better. Two years ago it was disclosed that the number children registered as autistic in Scotland had risen from 820 in 1998 to 3, 484 in 2005 [7]. That is adding about 380 children a year - up from an average of about 55 for the preceding period, or an increase in the average rate of incidence of about 7 times. These children will not get better, and disregarding the untold human misery of the problem this is set to cost the country tens of billions a year. Such is the concern of Department of Health that in the rest of the UK they are not even bothering to count, let alone provide a plausible explanation of the phenomenon. Recent news of settlements in the US vaccine court relating to autism and mitochondrial dysfunction leave no further grounds for complacency [8].

It is evident that the Health Protection Agency is more intent in controlling public opinion on this issue than in providing the contextual information on which people can make an informed judgement. We are not being told the real benefits or risks, which in a democratic and plural society should be our right. The Government should disclose real information about the proliferation of measles, and the vaccine status of those who catch it, and whether in some cases the disease is being spread through vaccination. It should give a real assessment of

the dangers of not having the vaccine, and it should stop its ruthless campaign of denying the existence of vaccine damage, so the extent of the problem can be assessed for the first time without institutional bias, and so that steps can be taken to help the victims.

John Stone

- [1] BBC News, 'Concern at rise in measles cases', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/7297127.stm>
- [2] BBC News, 'MMR "does not trigger reaction"', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7226763.stm>
- [3] Muscat et al, 'Measles in Europe in 2001-2', Staten Serum Institut, Copenhagen, Denmark, June 2003, <http://www.eurosurveillance.org/em/v08n06/0806-221.asp>
- [4] Quoted by David Kirby, 'Pediatricians demand censorship from ABC', Age of Autism, <http://www.ageofautism.com/2008/01/aap-its-time-fo.html>
- [5] National Vaccine Information Centre (NVIC), Medialerts, 'Found 182 events with Vaccine 'MMR' and Patient Died', <http://tinyurl.com/2do72v>
- [6] Lucy Johnston, 'Were all of these children killed by the triple MMR jab?', Sunday Express 13 January 2002.
- [7] Graham Grant, 'Number of sufferers has quadrupled in only seven year', Scottish Daily Mail, 1 March 2006.
- [8] The Age of Autism, <http://www.ageofautism.com/>