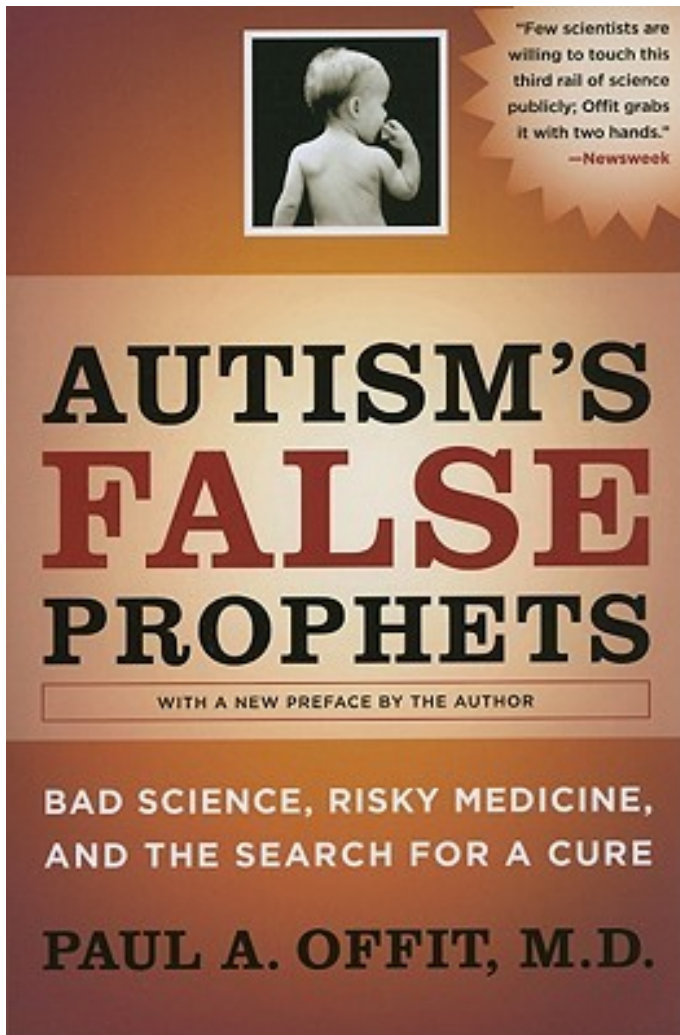

Paul A. Offit

Autism's False Prophets: Bad Science, Risky Medicine, and the Search for a Cure



Title: Autism's False Prophets: Bad Science, Risky Medicine, and the Search for a Cure

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Format: Paperback

Language: English

Pages: 298

Publisher: Columbia University Press,
1268377200

ISBN: 023114637X

Format: PDF / Kindle / ePub

Size: 8.7 MB

Download: allowed

Description

A London researcher was the first to assert that the combination measles-mumps-rubella vaccine known as MMR caused autism in children. Following this "discovery," a handful of parents declared that a mercury-containing preservative in several vaccines was responsible for the disease. If mercury caused autism, they reasoned, eliminating it from a child's system should treat the disorder. Consequently, a number of untested alternative therapies arose, and, most tragically, in one such treatment, a doctor injected a five-year-old autistic boy with a chemical in an effort to cleanse him of mercury, which stopped his heart instead.

Children with autism have been placed on stringent diets, subjected to high-temperature saunas, bathed in magnetic clay, asked to swallow digestive enzymes and activated charcoal, and injected with various combinations of vitamins, minerals, and acids. Instead of helping, these therapies can hurt those who are most vulnerable, and particularly in the case of autism, they undermine childhood vaccination programs that have saved millions of lives. An overwhelming body of scientific evidence clearly shows that childhood vaccines are safe and does not cause autism. Yet widespread fear of vaccines on the part of parents persists.

In this book, Paul A. Offit, a national expert on vaccines, challenges the modern-day false prophets who have so egregiously misled the public and exposes the opportunism of the lawyers, journalists, celebrities, and politicians who support them. Offit recounts the history of autism research and the exploitation of this tragic condition by advocates and zealots. He considers the manipulation of science in the popular media and the courtroom, and he explores why society is susceptible to the bad science and risky therapies put forward by many antivaccination activists.

Insightful reviews

Faydra: I get it, I get it. Avoiding vaccinations because of media-hyped fears in spite of good science makes for bad parenting. But I could have used a bit more understanding for those parents who, because of what they have experienced in the life of their child, don't give good science as much credit as Offit. A concluding chapter with news of any leads or scientific hopes in the future of autism research would have been welcome as well, but I guess Offit didn't want to set himself up as another "False Prophet."

I also didn't appreciate how dismissive he was of diet adjustments, probiotics, etc. It seems these are positive, healthy adjustments any parent seeking the best for his child's well-being (not just parents of autistic children) would be prudent to consider. Offit doesn't really explain why these trends are "False." Instead, I got the impression they were dismissed simply for being financially draining.

As for me, a mom and not a scientist, I'll happily spend my \$35 a month on prescription Folic Acid for my son, add Flax Seed Oil to his breakfast each day, and sprinkle curcumin on his lunch each afternoon even if Offit thinks I'm wasting my money. And even after reading the book, I do

not regret our decision to go slow with our son's shot schedule (we're vaccinating but at our own pace), because logic says that injecting pathogenic cells into my child's body is something that should be taken very seriously. So it's up to me, the parent, to decide if I think that much more than good science dictates pediatric recommendations... What of the financial interests of drug companies and the overall attitude that the best fix has to involve a medication or an injection with no other focus on other factors (nutrition!) for overall health?

But that's just me, a total nut, who is about to put garlic drops in her three-year-old's ear because today he's been complaining of an earache.

All of that seems pretty critical but I still give the book three stars. Why? Because Offit does a great job explaining just how the MMR-causes-autism and then the mercury-in-shots-causes-autism scare came into being, but why parents should be assured of the safety of vaccinations. Since we're obviously never going to get those follow-up explanations and reassurances from the media it's nice to have it all together here.

Megan: Despite the fact that those researchers who initially perpetuated the myth of the link between MMR and autism had been found to be frauds, misinformation still continues to prevalent in the media/social networking. Though I never fully bought in, I was cautious vaccinated my youngest two children - using a slower schedule because in the back of my mind was always "what if vaccines do cause autism?" Everyone hates big pharma - they are an easy scapegoat. And I read this knowing Paul Offit is known as "For Profit Offit" - an apparent big pharma supporter and having a monetary interest as a vaccine developer himself. But I wanted more information because of mumps and pertussis outbreaks locally, and measles outbreaks in other parts of the country - herd immunity seemed to be declining. The facts are laid out here in this book. Those who perpetuated the vaccine/autism myth had plenty of personal financial incentive to do so. Though the hysteria began with a small study of 8 children in England - 5 of whom were involved with an attorney looking to sue pharmaceutical companies for causing autism and said attorneys financed the "research" - large studies of 100,000+ children have shown there is no link and that even the thiomersal preservative people feared has had no link to autism. Thiomersal was removed from childhood vaccines in 2001 and yet the rate of autism continues to rise! Additionally, I am one of those parents who feared the number of vaccinations kids received and "vaccine overload" - but now I know that the number of immunologic challenges contained in 14 vaccinations given today are less than what was contained in 1 vaccine 100 years ago. Also interesting to note is that while autism diagnosis has increased in the past few decades, the diagnosis of "mental retardation" has declined. And while I can completely sympathize with parents who are desperately searching for a reason for their children developed autism, the research speaks for itself - it's not vaccinations. So, I've decided to let go of those fears in the back of my mind. I took my youngest in last week to finish off the vaccine series I'd been delaying.

Rae: Damned statistics. For every study that shows there could be a link between vaccines and autism, there is one that appears to show no link. The truth (and cause of autism) is out there somewhere. I wish the two "sides" of the issue would just drop their differences and work on finding something genuine that could assist parents to help their autistic children.

Offit's book is pretty much a response to *Evidence of Harm* and I found it to be quite snarky and

condescending in tone. I really didn't care for some of his conclusions: There is no connection whatsoever between vaccines and autism. Done deal. Those who think there is a connection are simply fools. One must be a scientist to really understand what is going on. Alternative therapies are always bogus. The media is evil. Especially Oprah. Parents are stupid and will believe anything when desperate. Lawyers just want money. The "legitimate" government agencies and pharmaceutical companies have our best interests at heart. Only trained scientists or doctors are qualified to interpret or conduct valid studies.

I don't always accept these conclusions. Sometimes they are true and other times they are not. I got tired of wading through the condescension to get to the autistic plot thread.

I still don't know...

Emily: I totally admit to being predisposed to agreeing with and liking this e-book earlier than I picked it up. Foolish me, I am keen on the clinical process instead of anecdotes as a more desirable technique to separate the very fact from the fiction. That being said, I discovered it to be a thorough, well-articulated rationalization of the clinical method as a rule and of the increase and fall of assorted scapegoats that have been erroneously blamed for inflicting autism. This wide-ranging ebook covers the background of class-action proceedings opposed to clinical companies, epidemiological studies, simple statistics, the clinical method, how our tradition knows technological know-how (or not), how the media portrays science, and the timeline of anti-vaccine activism. Dr. Offit methodically info the final ten to 15 years worthy of questionable "causes" of autism (thimerosal, MMR vaccine, blend of both, etc.) in addition to a few of the substitute "remedies" proposed (chelation, hyperbaric oxygen chambers, swallowing or injecting numerous microorganisms, minerals or proteins). Whereas repetitive at times, his argument is strengthened through the sheer variety of stories that experience proven no correlation among vaccination charges and autism rates, no deleterious results as a result of the thimerosal preservative. He strains the arguments opposed to thimerosal and MMR vaccine as they have been outfitted in the course of the Nineteen Nineties after which conscientiously dismantles them with good documented studies. While I will comprehend mom and dad greedy at straws for something that would aid their children, I used to be disgusted through those that peddled those replacement methods, preying on parents' fears and love in their children. The resistance of these who proposed those "treatments" (and stood to benefit greatly from their use) to having their efficacy evaluated in a managed examine - after which absolutely the refusal to just accept facts that did not consider their preconceived notions - made me furious. Asserting anything loudly many times and over (when the entire facts contradicts what you say) does not make it so. I discovered that during common school, folks. The sheer hypocrisy of the extraordinary anti-vaccine, conspiracy theorists was once mind-boggling, relatively while it got here to monetary backing of studies. I liked the bankruptcy on "Science and the Media" which defined how tough it's for technological know-how to make its case to the public. So much technology is not relatively flashy or intriguing to watch. It really is boring. It truly is methodical. It takes time to appreciate and analyze. After which one other scientist comes alongside to do a similar factor again, simply to ensure the effects from the 1st examine are reproducible. After which another. Whereas that ordinarily presents extra trustworthy conclusions, it relatively does not make for edge-of-your-seat television. Because the aim of such a lot media is to extend viewership and, therefore, earn ads dollars, the boringly actual scientist could be shoved apart in desire of the

flashy, exciting, muckraking journalist or the attractive, passionate, University-of-Google-educated actress. "Science and Society" addressed how our tradition tactics medical information, or doesn't, because the case might be. Dr. Offit addresses a number of tradition facets including: the cynicism and starvation for scandal in our culture, the inability of knowing of the medical technique and clinical terminology, the human wish to locate a solution which regularly leads humans to imagine that accident equals causality, and what sort of more uncomplicated it's to scare humans than to "unscare" them, to call a few. As a scientist who has committed his lifestyles to treating young ones and constructing a vaccine (for rotavirus) that absolutely has stored lives, he's understandably enthusiastic about this issue. His frustration with the enormity of efforts and assets being diverted into beating the lifeless horse of MMR or thimerosal because the reason for autism, rather than getting used to go looking for a true reason and powerful remedies is palpable during the book. The publication occasionally toilets down in medical detail, yet end result of the topic matter, that is a little necessary. For extra ebook reviews, stopover at my blog, construct adequate Bookshelves.

Tim Heard: there's a lot of knowledge on autism being generated and circulated by means of rumors, the mass media, and the Internet. seriously comparing this substantial physique of data is like attempting to navigate a wide ocean that's nearly most unlikely to navigate. that's what it's like for many humans after they try and comprehend autism with the intention to aid their household plagued by it, quite often their children. This e-book acts as a compass and a radar to navigate the sea of data so as to separate the proof of autism from the myths, misconceptions, and falsehoods relating to what it is, the way it develops within the brains of these laid low with it, what factors it, and what will be performed to aid autistic people. The ebook opens up with the author, Paul A. Offit, in short describing during this edition's prologue his purposes for changing into a doctor and his reports with the dislike mail and demise threats he acquired from offended mom and dad of autistic kids at the assumption that vaccines (his speciality) brought on the disorder. within the introduction, he makes a comparison with the elevated visibility of autism to the polio epidemic in early-20th century the United States when it comes to public response. In either cases, humans panicked and desperately sought any kind of technique to deal the outbreaks (Note: the starting to be fee of autism is be aware rather an outbreak) and, if possible, remedy them. while the technological know-how and executive associations couldn't offer rapid solutions to the final public, a number of medical professionals have seemed with them and provides of a cure. To many people, specially parents, such medical professionals are like prophets that promise a deliverance of a kind of salvation from the epidemics; they have been the one ones who cared approximately them and feature the easiest of intentions. Unfortunately, such assumptions weren't the case as these so-called "prophets" have handled their sufferers with tricky and dear remedies that experience no validity in science, have been useless and, in a few cases, dangerous. Given this fact, they're 'false prophets' who emotionally and financially take advantage of the desperation of folks looking a treatment for his or her kid's autism for his or her personal pursuits and benefits. The remainder of the publication then is going over the numerous conditions that gave upward push to and permeate the 'false prophets' with reference to autism. They comprise the shortcoming of public knowing of science, the failure on a part of the general public and the technology associations to communicate, how details on technological know-how is filterd via the mass media with combined results, and the tradition that equates in general held ideals with universal wisdom, that turns out to thrive on cynicism and scandal, and that considers cause to be an enemy of

emotion. the writer additionally discusses, in layman's terms, the profiles of such 'false prophets' as Andrew Wakefield, Mark and David Gier, Lyn Redwood, and Sallie Bernard, the motivations of selling their situations as to what motives autism (the delusion that vaccines cause autism, for example), and their own agendas they sought to accomplish via exposure campaigns and complaints opposed to vaccine brands and the government. The autism advocacy teams together with Defeat Autism Now (DAN), also are discussed. the oldsters who're skeptical of the entire issue, such a lot of whose youngsters have autism, also are discussed. Such mom and dad comprise Kathleen Siedel, founding father of the web site neurodiversity.com, Camille Clark, a mildly autistic blogger referred to as Autism Diva, and Michael Fitzpatrick, a British health care provider with an autistic son and a critic opposed to the vaccines-cause-autism fable promoted by way of Andrew Wakefield. As an autistic one who is presently dwelling with my mom and dad who've been skeptical of the ailment due to the fact my beginning (and have given me this booklet for my twenty fifth birthday), I hugely suggest this publication to anyone who desires to have a few crystal transparent information regarding autism, together with mom and dad with autistic children, individuals with a kind of autism, aides and lecturers to autistic students, and people who've an curiosity in autism. it is going to turn out to be a necessary navigator within the large and cloudy ocean of unevaluated details on autism.

Rebecca: whereas this ebook is particularly concerning the tale of the vaccine-autism scare of the Nineteen Nineties and 2000s, it additionally does an exceptional task of addressing the public's conception of technological know-how and medication in general. The ebook is laid out chronologically, conversing approximately the entire fake leads autism remedies have had long ago years, how vaccines and mercury received to be the scapegoat for autism, and the proof on both side. The epilogue even comprises a few contemporary advancements that could not be labored into the textual content proper. I think the paperback model will include extra such things. There also are a few beautiful chapters on what this teaches us approximately technological know-how within the courts, technology within the media, and technology and the people. something Offit is particularly cautious to do is usually stability the evidence of the situation, with the attract feelings through having wide charges from people. In a case, the place much relies on who acknowledged what, and who's rather looking for the oldsters of autistic children, I loved that. i assumed the booklet did a superb task of either taking pictures the most avid gamers during this debate, in addition to the fogeys and youngsters themselves who have been involved. I obtained the sensation Offit used to be sympathetic to oldsters on both sides -- that he felt mom and dad at the anti-vaccine aspect have been attempting to do the easiest they can for his or her kids, yet have been utilizing undesirable information. it really is frightening stuff, to gain lie can shuttle around the globe sooner than the reality has received its boots on. i personally have Asperger's Syndrome, and a part of my prognosis used to be simply because my mom used to be attempting to train herself approximately my brother's autism. I shudder to imagine if she had came across a few of this. one of many sizeable difficulties of the Internet, is that it's a repository of information, a lot of it garbage. getting to know something through the net isn't really a question of discovering any information, it's a topic of discovering which details is not crap.

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