

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

A Science Service Publication
Volume 134, No. 10, September 3, 1988

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Subscription Department
231 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43305

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$34.50; 2 yrs., \$58.00.
(Foreign postage \$6.00 additional per year.) Change of
address: Four to six weeks' notice is required. Please
state exactly how magazine is to be addressed.
Include zip code. For new subscriptions only call
(1) 800-247-2160. Printed in U.S.A. Second class
postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional
mailing offices. Title registered as trademark U.S. and
Canadian Patent Offices. Published every Saturday by
SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc., 1719 N St., N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20036. (202-785-2255)
ISSN 0036-8423

Letters

Risk and responsibility

I am the mother of two, the youngest just 1 year old. Neither of my children had any serious reactions to their immunizations as babies. However, I am a little disturbed to read that the real reason for giving the oral, rather than the injectable, polio vaccine is not just to protect my child but also to protect those children who may not have obtained the vaccine ("Polio Policy: A Bitter Pill to Swallow," SN: 7/16/88, p.43).

I am from an upper-middle-class environment, and I believe all the kids my children were exposed to as infants were from similar backgrounds and thus were properly immunized. I also know there are clinics where less advantaged children can obtain free vaccinations, if their parents are responsible enough to take them. Why should I have to subject my children to needless risk, albeit exceedingly small, in order to protect other children

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Cover: This computer-generated picture is one frame from a sequence illustrating the head-on collision of two neutron stars. The colored streaks represent the trajectories of selected particles of stellar material. Such pictures result from the use of supercomputers for solving the equations of Einstein's general theory of relativity. (Illustration: Charles Evans/Caltech)

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whose parents are not as responsible?

I hope the change in immunization policy is quicker than the two to five years mentioned in the article. I do not see why the injectable vaccine cannot be given to infants now, separately from the DTP vaccine if need be. Then, when the children are older and have some immunity built up, their pediatricians could follow with the oral vaccine.

In the meantime, maybe our health officials need to put more effort into getting to those children who are not brought to clinics voluntarily.

*Belinda Root
Houston, Tex.*

Debunking debated

To give credit to The Amazing Randi's debunking of the French homeopathic experiments ("NATURE douses dilution experiment," SN: 7/30/88, p.69) boggles my mind. Here is a former stage magician mixing up the

bottles and taping codes on the ceiling (misdirecting attention?) with the express intention of proving the homeopathic procedures worthless. In fact, he has made a career out of invalidating chosen targets which he has labeled as pseudoscience. Not impartial, he. Who, I must ask, is more likely to have fooled the NATURE editor?

*Hugh M. S. Lovel
Blairsville, Ga.*

One argument used to discredit the French homeopathic experiments seems weak: that Benveniste's lab is supported by a homeopathic drug company. Aren't most studies of synthetic drugs also supported by drug companies with vested interests? It now costs up to \$125 million to prove a drug safe and efficacious in the United States. Much of that money goes from drug companies to drug-testing firms.

*Jim Duke
Blairsville, Md.*

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