The Lancet retracts 1998 study linking autism to MMR vaccine

The Lancet has retracted a study published in 1998 that suggested an association between autism and childhood vaccination with the measles-mumps-rubella MMR vaccine, according to a recent press release.

The retraction came after several years of debate on the issue and in the wake of an embargoed commentary in BMJ, formerly the British Medical Journal, which called on The Lancet to retract the findings.

Additionally, the U.K. General Medical Council found that the primary researcher in the 1998 study, Andrew Wakefield, MD, and two colleagues, acted “dishonestly” and “irresponsibly” in conducting research. The Council reviewed the findings of the original article and found that 12 children in the study had been selected especially for the study – not 12 consecutive patients, as had been previously claimed. The Council also found that the study had not been approved by the appropriate ethics committee, as the researchers had claimed.

“So fully retract this paper from the published record,” the editors of The Lancet wrote. Ten of the study’s 13 authors signed a formal retraction in 2004, that had been previously published in The Lancet. They retracted their findings after a revelation that the main author was being paid separately by lawyers for parents who claimed their children were harmed by the immunizations, and those children were involved in the study.

The study undermined public confidence in the triple vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella by suggesting it might be linked to autism, and vaccination rates fell dramatically in Britain and several other European nations and have yet to fully recover, although subsequent studies dismissed a connection between autism and the vaccine.

The Lancet has retracted fewer than 20 studies in the 186 year history of the publication.


PERSPECTIVE:
One of the most remarkable things about this turn of events is that the retraction has received more attention than any of the science that took place between the initial article and now.

The original article should never have been published in the first place. Somehow it was taken to be a study, but it was not a study at all. It was just a series of cases. The editors of The Lancet appeared to publish it simply because it was interesting.

Unfortunately, children were killed by this. Parents became wary of the vaccine, and their children died as a result. This retraction will not get those children their lives back.

The most positive thing that could potentially come of this is that the retraction will resonate with other parents who are skeptical of the vaccine. Perhaps, as we move forward, more children will not suffer.

The Lancet has taken a bad turn recently. Somehow, the editors appear to have taken a path away from science and toward journalism. An increasing number of articles in the journal are based on very poor or very thin science. They should be ashamed, as should the Royal Free Hospital.

The problem is that the public bestows a certain degree of trust in these medical journals. That trust was betrayed, and people suffered as a result. This is a sad, sad chapter in the history of pediatrics.

– Paul Offit, MD
Infectious Diseases in Children Editorial Board

For bacterial conjunctivitis

Doctor Strong.

For bacterial conjunctivitis

BESIVANCE™ is indicated for the treatment of bacterial conjunctivitis caused by susceptible isolates of the following bacteria:

CDC eye culture group B:
Corynebacterium pseudodiphtheriticum*
Corynebacterium striatum*
Haemophilus influenzae
Moraxella lacunata
Staphylococcus aureus
Staphylococcus epidermidis
Staphylococcus hominis*
Staphylococcus lugdunensis*
Streptococcus mitis
Streptococcus oralis
Streptococcus pneumoniae
Streptococcus salivarius*

*Efficacy for this organism was studied in fewer than 10 infections.

The Lancet retracts 1998 study linking autism to MMR vaccine

The Lancet has retracted a study published in 1998 that suggested an association between autism and childhood vaccination with the measles-mumps-rubella MMR vaccine, according to a recent press release.

The retraction came after several years of debate on the issue and in the wake of an embargoed commentary in BMJ, formerly the British Medical Journal, which called on The Lancet to retract the findings.

Additionally, the U.K. General Medical Council found that the primary researcher in the 1998 study, Andrew Wakefield, MD, and two colleagues, acted “dishonestly” and “irresponsibly” in conducting research. The Council reviewed the findings of the original article and found that 12 children in the study had been selected especially for the study – not 12 consecutive patients, as had been previously claimed. The Council also found that the study had not been approved by the appropriate ethics committee, as the researchers had claimed.

“So fully retract this paper from the published record,” the editors of The Lancet wrote. Ten of the study’s 13 authors signed a formal retraction in 2004, that had been previously published in The Lancet. They retracted their findings after a revelation that the main author was being paid separately by lawyers for parents who claimed their children were harmed by the immunizations, and those children were involved in the study.

The study undermined public confidence in the triple vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella by suggesting it might be linked to autism, and vaccination rates fell dramatically in Britain and several other European nations and have yet to fully recover, although subsequent studies dismissed a connection between autism and the vaccine.

The Lancet has retracted fewer than 20 studies in the 186 year history of the publication.


PERSPECTIVE:
One of the most remarkable things about this turn of events is that the retraction has received more attention than any of the science that took place between the initial article and now.

The original article should never have been published in the first place. Somehow it was taken to be a study, but it was not a study at all. It was just a series of cases. The editors of The Lancet appeared to publish it simply because it was interesting.

Unfortunately, children were killed by this. Parents became wary of the vaccine, and their children died as a result. This retraction will not get those children their lives back.

The most positive thing that could potentially come of this is that the retraction will resonate with other parents who are skeptical of the vaccine. Perhaps, as we move forward, more children will not suffer.

The Lancet has taken a bad turn recently. Somehow, the editors appear to have taken a path away from science and toward journalism. An increasing number of articles in the journal are based on very poor or very thin science. They should be ashamed, as should the Royal Free Hospital.

The problem is that the public bestows a certain degree of trust in these medical journals. That trust was betrayed, and people suffered as a result. This is a sad, sad chapter in the history of pediatrics.

– Paul Offit, MD
Infectious Diseases in Children Editorial Board