



3341 WEST BEARSS AVENUE
TAMPA, FL 33618

WWW.WHOLISTICPEDS.COM

813-960-3415 PHONE
813-960-3465 FAX

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Dear Friends,

I would like to thank everyone who had passionately lobbied for the passage of Senate Bill 242, the Vaccine Safety Bill. As I reported last week, The Senate Ways and Means Committee ended without a vote being taken on the Bill. The Bill was not permitted to be put to a full Senate vote, so the Bill did not pass this year. Despite this, my efforts toward improving the Florida's vaccine policy will continue.

Thimerosal (Mercury)

There was much pushback by some legislators and physicians about the outright banning of thimerosal from entering the state. Their argument was that although virtually all vaccines are currently available in a thimerosal-free form, in the case of a health emergency if there was only a thimerosal-containing vaccine available, they wanted to be able to access that vaccine. I see their point, and an amendment was added to the Bill that allowed the Governor to override the ban in the case of such an emergency. I will continue to press forward in my hope that no person, and no fetus, is exposed to a substance that Sigma, one of the manufacturers of thimerosal, calls "Highly Toxic" in its own [Material Safety Data Sheet](#). I remind everyone that I keep an updated list of all current thimerosal-containing vaccines on the "[Vaccines](#)" section at www.wholisticpeds.com.

A Flexible Vaccine Schedule

Upon further reviewing the Florida law, it is apparent to me that the current recommendations and statutes give the family much flexibility in how they may vaccinate their child. After having spoken with thousands of families over the last few years, it is apparent to me that an overwhelming majority of Florida citizens do not know what their vaccine rights are. According to information provided by the Florida Department of Health, "If a child has not completed the required immunizations for child care or school, but is in the process of completing the series, the documentation on the Form 680 has a designated place for the health care practitioner to provide a Temporary Medical Exemption". So, to get a child into daycare or school, she/he must have started a vaccine schedule and have a plan in place to complete the schedule. The child does not need to be "up to date" to be enrolled. The family and health care practitioner can choose to follow the [CDC "Catch-up Schedule"](#) to complete the series of vaccines, but it is not mandatory that this catch-up schedule is followed. There are vaccine recommendations made by the Florida Department of Health, The Center for Disease Control and various physicians groups. However, there are no mandatory vaccines that must be given at birth or at any checkup. Prior to starting school or daycare, a parent has the right to vaccinate their child in any way that they see fit, although the physician has the right to discharge the patient from the practice if he/she does not agree with the schedule the family would like to follow. I would strongly encourage every family to fully review the vaccine information provided by the CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics, as well as other sources that provide alternative yet credible views such as the vaccine books authored by Dr. Bob Sears and Dr. Stephanie Cave.

There is also clear wording in the Statute as to who can claim a religious exemption. As I am not a member of the clergy, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on who can qualify for this exemption. For a better understanding as to what the law says about the Religious Exemption, [detailed information, including the actual wording of the statute and the Florida Supreme Court's 1998 ruling on the statute](#), can be found at www.know-vaccines.org.

In reality, no one knows how parents will respond once they learn their rights and properly educate themselves. I hope a system can be developed that will be able to track children who are vaccinated according to the CDC recommended schedule, those vaccinated by an alternative schedule, and those who are not vaccinated at all. We can then study the incidence of the vaccine preventable diseases and vaccine-associated chronic disease, and perhaps eventually we can identify people who may be at high risk for adverse events following vaccination.

Informed Consent

I strongly believe in and will continue to fight for a standardized, transparent informed consent system as follows:

A parent/patient should:

- Have the right to know the ingredients of the vaccine(s) to be administered.
- Have sufficient time to inform and educate themselves by weighing the risks and benefits of vaccinating, not vaccinating or implementing an alternate vaccine schedule.
- Render proper, written, legal consent PRIOR to the administration of any vaccine.
- Have protection from action being taken against them if a child were to contract a disease that may have been prevented by a vaccine. (*Note: the practitioner should also be protected by law regardless of whether the family is choosing to follow the recommended or an alternative plan. The provider should not be liable for a vaccine reaction or if the child were to contract a vaccine-preventable disease if the parent chose not to vaccinate.)

During my time advocating for Senate Bill 242, I chose to reach out to the Florida Pediatric Society leadership and have had very polite and meaningful conversations with them. Although they do not agree with all of the positions I have taken, I now have a seat at the table and I am thankful that they are giving me an opportunity to express my views. We agree that we have much common ground, and realize that we can disagree without being disagreeable. Going forward, I hope that I will be able to work with them to create a standardized, transparent informed consent system in the upcoming year. I welcome this opportunity and will send updates as new information becomes available.

In the end, each family will have to decide what they feel is in their family's best interest. The infectious diseases that the vaccines are intended to prevent can cause catastrophic illness. I do not want to see a return of diseases that I have never seen as a pediatrician of 15 years. If enough of the population is not vaccinated, we will lose our "herd immunity" and diseases will likely return. But I also have concerns about potential long term effects from vaccinations on the immune system and brain development of some people. Recent studies suggest that there may be a [50% reduction of Asthma in infants who had their first DTP vaccine delayed two months](#), and that there was a [nine-fold increase in Special Education services in boys who were vaccinated for Hepatitis B](#) (it must be pointed out that these were older version of the vaccines). Parents need to educate themselves and work with their health care practitioner to implement a plan that works for them.

Once again, thank you for all you have done and continue to do to help spread the word as we work together to implement the safest and most transparent vaccine program possible.

Take Care,

DrDavid