

CPS Today

No link between MMR and autism, CPS declares

The CPS made an official statement Thursday strongly refuting claims originating in the U.K. that the widely used measles-mumps-rubella (MMR)



Dr. Robert Issenman speaks to the press, with Dr. Lonnie Zwaigenbaum in the foreground.

vaccine might cause autism. The statement arises from a comprehensive review by the CPS Committee on Infectious Diseases and Immunization of a number of rigorous studies on MMR and autism.

“There is no evidence of a link between the MMR vaccine and autism,” said Dr. Robert Issenman at a morning press conference.

Dr. Lonnie Zwaigenbaum explained that autism typically becomes noticeable at the same age that children are routinely immunized with the MMR vaccine, so parents and even some physicians may infer a connection, even though autism is no less common in unvaccinated children. Indeed, evidence of autism often exists before vaccination but parents do not notice it until their children’s behaviour fails to keep up with that of their peers in the second year.

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Lewis MacKenzie and Dr. Jim Jan highlight opening ceremonies

“An army is a gang, and kids are really easy to mold into a gang.” Those words from a lifelong soldier were part of a sometimes sobering yet often funny keynote speech at Thursday’s opening ceremonies.

Lewis MacKenzie, retired Major-General, 33-year veteran of the

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Dr. David Smith (seated) and Maj.-Gen. (ret.) Lewis MacKenzie.

Events Overview

Friday, June 15

History of Paediatrics Breakfast
08:00-09:00 - Bayshore A & B

Oral Abstract Presentations
09:00-10:00 - Stanley Park Salons 1 & 2

Concurrent Workshops 10:30-12:00, 13:30-15:00 - Cypress 1 & 2, Oak 1 & 2, Coquitlam, Cowichan, Prospect, and Arbutus Rooms

Luncheon Satellite Symposium
12:00-13:30 - Stanley Park Ballroom
Urinary tract infections, sinusitis
(*Bristol-Myers Squibb*)

Residents Section Luncheon
12:00-13:30 - Marine Room

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Lecture
15:30-16:30 - Stanley Park Ballroom

Satellite Symposia
16:30-18:00 - Cypress Room
Childhood pneumonia (*Pfizer Canada*)
18:00-19:30 - Stanley Park Salon 3
Pneumococcal disease (*Wyeth-Ayerst*)

Dinner Events 18:00-21:00 Off-site
(see Final Program pages 49-50)

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The Maywood Community School choir sang at the opening ceremony, and Dr. Jim Jan (left) paid tribute to Dr. Geoffrey Robinson (inset).

>> "CEREMONIES" FROM PAGE 1

Canadian Armed Forces, and former head of the UN Protection Force in Yugoslavia, had many stories to tell, but perhaps the most chilling was one of technology: M-16 and AK-47 rifles, developed for the small hands of Vietnamese adults, turn out to be a perfect fit in the grip of a child.

"There are 43 wars going on in the world today," he said, "and most are between factions inside countries." MacKenzie described how children are coerced into fighting these wars, and how even when they do not, they are often casualties.

Yet children remain remarkably resilient, and when removed from combat, revert to being kids again – so his message was one of both horror and hope, hope in which we lucky Canadians have a role.

"Your obligations abroad are proportional to your gifts at home – so we have a hell of a bill to pay," he said.

Following MacKenzie's speech, Drs. David Smith and Carey Matsuba presented the inaugural Geoffrey C. Robinson Award in Paediatric Research to Dr. James E. Jan, the renowned B.C. specialist in the treatment of visually impaired and multi-disability children.

Dr. Jan used his acceptance speech to thank Dr. Robinson, who was in the audience, for his even longer service to the paediatric community.

PLEASE NOTE - VANCOUVER TRANSIT SkyTrain Still Available Despite Strike

Greater Vancouver transit drivers are on strike and there are no bus, commuter rail, or SeaBus services. However, the SkyTrain rapid transit line continues to run. The nearby **Waterfront, Burrard, and Granville stations** are underground, but most of the rest of the line is elevated and can take you as far as the southeastern suburb of Surrey – a 90-minute round trip that includes excellent views of Vancouver and its environs. SkyTrain security staff are not on strike, and continue to patrol the otherwise automated rapid transit system.

>> "MMR" FROM PAGE 1

Dr. Mark Bigham was more direct. "The consistent conclusion of each of a number of recent, comprehensive, independent reviews is that there is no relationship between MMR and autism." He outlined a number of problems with the study that created the original controversy.

Dr. Joanne Embree, chair of the Infectious Diseases and Immunization Committee, stressed the safety of and continuing need for MMR.

"Immunization saves more lives every day than any other health care intervention worldwide," she said. Measles has been effectively eliminated in Canada, only

one or two children a year contract rubella, and mumps is also extremely rare.

Even though immunization rates have not dropped because of controversy in the press over MMR and other vaccines, the CPS is taking a stand on the issue to assure parents that immunization remains the best course of action for all children – and to alleviate the inevitable anxiety in parents of autistic children.

"The recently published studies mean that we now have the information to make a definitive statement," said Dr. Embree. "MMR does not play any part in the development of autism."



Journalists and camera crews at the MMR press conference.

Preschoolers and behavioural drugs

"Medications for kids are lousy treatments for troubled parents and social problems," said Dr. Margaret Weiss in a fiery closing speech at Thursday's Paediatric Update.

Her presentation followed five others from Drs. Derek Human, Kevan Jacobson, Kathryn Selby, and David Scheifele, and brought into focus the problems of trying to treat behaviour problems – especially in very young children from high-risk situations – with psychotropic medications, particularly since there have been no proper studies of those drugs' effectiveness as treatments for preschoolers.

"Adults come to see physicians for how they are suffering," Weiss said, "while kids are brought in for how much they bother other people – their parents. What if parents were brought in by their teenage adolescent offspring? We would certainly consider that a significant referral bias."

Weiss noted that in a large American study, most children under three with severe behavioural problems received drugs alone, often multiple medications simultaneously or in series, despite the high-risk situations in which they lived and the lack of evidence that the drugs truly help.

"No child under three has ever been involved in a double blind, placebo controlled study of psychotropic medications, even though we are medicating those kids," Weiss added, going on to emphasize that many other



Dr. Margaret Weiss of UBC ended the Paediatric Update with a bang.

conditions in children's lives, from parental neglect to educational problems, can and do affect behaviour in the youngest children. She pointed out that the physicians most experienced with child misbehaviour are the most conservative with prescribing psychotropic drugs.

Her speech prompted a number of questions and comments from the audience, many centred on the lack of available paediatric psychiatrists outside Canada's large cities, and the remarkable jobs many paediatricians are doing despite a lack of training (in medical schools, residency, and CME) in paediatric psychiatry.

"Misbehaviour is the child's voice," Weiss said. "Don't take away their voice to express pain. Deal with the educational deficit – we have to be very careful before we quiet such a child."

Southern B.C. oddities

◆ Vancouver's West End, the West Side, and West Vancouver are all different places – while the East End, East Side, and East Vancouver all name the same place. (The *Downtown Eastside*, however, is different again.)

◆ Vancouver Island, accessible by a 90-minute ferry ride across Georgia Strait, is as long north to south as the country of England.

◆ B.C.'s coastal green sea urchin has one of the longest scientific names of any organism: *Strongylocentrotus droebachiensis*.

◆ The Port of Vancouver was the first anywhere to experiment with container shipping of cargoes. Now containers are the world standard.

◆ Point Grey, location of the University of B.C., is named after Earl Grey, also the namesake of the tea variety.

Boat Cruise Tickets for Saturday, June 16

The CPS boat cruise aboard the *M. V. Harbour Princess* departs from Coal Harbour on Saturday, June 16 at 6:30 p.m.

The vessel will travel east up Burrard Inlet, passing between Vancouver and North Vancouver, then north past Belcarra and Deep Cove to the isolated fjord known as Indian Arm. It returns in the late evening.

The cruise includes dinner and music from Rhythm Roundup. Only 200 tickets are available, for \$65 each. **Ticket sales (at the registration desk) end at 5:00 p.m. today, June 15.**

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

The winner of the Trade Show contest for a trip for two anywhere in North America via Air Canada is:

Dr. Judy Van Stralen

Dr. Van Stralen is a resident from Kingston, Ontario.

PLEASE NOTE

Correction to Directions

Yesterday's issue of *CPS Today* claimed that the Canada Place cruise ship terminal is west of the Bayshore Hotel and Resort.

That was incorrect – **Canada Place is directly east of the Hotel**, as are the rest of downtown and Gastown.

PLEASE NOTE

Abstract Author Omitted

The May/June 2001 issue of *Paediatrics & Child Health* omitted an author from one abstract: **DR. R. ANSARI should have been listed** among the authors of abstract/poster presentation 20, "Chronic and serious aggressive behaviours in children and adolescents are commonly associated with psychiatric disorders."

Today's highlights - Friday, June 15



Friday brings a full day of **concurrent workshops** covering topics as diverse as CME and CPD resources on the Internet, Munchausen by proxy, otolaryngology, asthma, dermatology, orthopedics, speech problems, and autism – as well as a number of other events.

First thing today, Dr. Graham Fraser leads the History of Paediatrics breakfast through a **history of paediatric surgery** over the last century, from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. in the Bayshore room.

Following Wednesday's symposium on pertussis sponsored by Aventis Pasteur, and Thursday's on meningococcal diseases sponsored by Merck Frosst Canada, today's agenda features three satellite symposia.

The luncheon event, running from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. in the Stanley Park Ballroom, is Bristol-Myers Squibb's two-topic symposium, featuring Dr. Denis Geary on controversies in management of **children with urinary tract infections**, then Dr. Marc Lebel on the **diagnosis and treatment of sinusitis**. Dr. Milton Tenenbein chairs.

In the evening, Pfizer Canada's session on **childhood pneumonia** has Dr. Joanne Langley in the Cypress Room from 4:30 to 6:00, updating attendees on changes to the epidemiology of childhood pneumonia, the judicious use of antimicrobials, and ambulatory vs. hospital care for affected patients.

From 6:00 to 7:30, Wyeth-Ayerst Canada sponsors Drs. Joanne Embree of U of M, David Scheifele of UBC, and George Siber of Wyeth-Lederle Vaccines on a new 7-valent conjugate **vaccine for invasive pneumococcal disease**. The session also features interactive touchpad technology to help with open dialogue between the presenters and attendees. A dinner reception at the Vancouver Art Gallery downtown follows.

Earlier, though, is a key speech, from 3:30 to 4:30 in the Stanley Park Ballroom: the **Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada Lecture** by Dr. Michael Kramer, in which he will discuss applying the rigorous methods of randomized trials used in clinical interventions to the currently less stringent fields of community-based and public health interventions.

Ticket sales for Saturday night's boat cruise end at 5:00 p.m. at the registration booth. And finally, the **Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine section** presents its awards off-site from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. – note that tickets are required.

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