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# Sacred Cow Wursthhaus

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## About Me



ERIC

HILDEMAN  
MILWAUKEE,  
WISCONSIN, UNITED  
STATES

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2009

## Bill Maher, Vaccines, and Autism

So, apparently, this bit of pseudoscience keeps cropping up. People continue to believe that vaccines cause autism, or are bad for you in some obscure way. This anti-vaccination movement is probably the biggest outcry against vaccines since Edward Jenner first gave his own son cowpox in order to protect him against smallpox. That innoculation worked, by the way, and 200 years later, vaccination is still proven. Why oh why, do people not trust 200 years of proven science and medical track record?

Below this blog on my Facebook page, you'll see the video clip of Bill Maher arguing with Bill Frist about why he would never have the H1N1 vaccine himself. He feels that vaccines mutate too fast for immunization programs to be of much use. Now, that's only true if a certain percentag of the population does not get vaccinated, and the anti-vaccination movement helps insure that percentage stays abnormally high. In other words, it's the same sort of self-fulfilling prophecy that Bill decries in hi movie, Religiolous.

Now, I trust Bill will change his mind about this one. He may never fully trust Western medicine, but I think his natural intelligence will eventually convince him that the problem is with the financing and insurance structures behind healthcare, rather than with the science behind it. The science is sound.

So what prompted me to blog this comes down to two quotes you'll see the one Bill give the other Bill in this video clip. First, Maher quotes from someone he says is the Chief Control Officer of the U.S. FDA, a J. Anthony Morris. The quote goes like this, "There is no evidence that any influenza vaccine thus far developed is effective in preventing or mitigating any attack of influenza. The producers of these vaccines know they are worthless, but they go on selling them anyway."

I tried finding out who this J. Anthony Morris was. Search after search revealed nothing. This guy didn't even have an entry on Wikipedia, and all I could find was one blogger after another making feedback comments on news service websites, quoting that same line over and over again. Where the fuck did that quote come from? Who the fuck was this guy? (I'm assuming he's dead, so I say "was." He'd be about 90 today, if still alive.) Finally, I found another blogger who was kind enough to do an archived newspaper search of the New York Times before he blogged. His name was B. Martin, and his blog is called Pathophilia. Here's what he found:

Morris was a virologist in the Division of Biologic Standards, which was part of the NIH until 1972 when the division was transferred to the FDA. In the fall of 1971, he made news by arguing to Congress that influenza vaccines were not just useless, but dangerous (see Lyons RD. Influenza shots held ineffective. NYT. October 15, 1971). He claimed that "not only has there been little or no benefit from the use of influenza vaccine in man, but harm has resulted." However, a federally appointed, 12-person scientific committee rejected Morris's claims of incompetence within his NIH division. The committee then proceeded to reject Morris's claims

that influenza vaccines are harmful (see Lyons RD. Charges of poor vaccine regulation rejected. NYT. November 30, 1971). A related news story in June 1972 indicates that Morris had been demoted within his division, which was now (presumably) a part of the FDA. But later news reports indicate that Morris was appointed director of the Slow and Temperate Virus Branch of the agency. In July 1976, Morris, then 57, was finally fired from the FDA for "insubordination" and "inefficiency." Morris claimed that he was sacked from his \$35,000-a-year job because he opposed President Ford's swine flu vaccination program. FDA officials acknowledged, at the time, that it was very unusual for an FDA employee to be fired, but the process that led to Morris's departure began long before anybody recognized the swine flu threat. Later Morris showed up on fear-mongering talk shows like "Phil Donahue" and provided anti-vaccine quotes to news reporters as recently as 1988.

A phrase search of various archived newspapers fails to return a source for the exact quote cited by Maher, except in 1 instance: Donald Harte, in a November 2007 editorial for the Marin Independent Journal ("Is there a vaccine that protects against non-science?") requotes Morris from a citation in a contemporary issue of Health & Fitness magazine. The quote was described as being 30 years old, but the original source was not identified.

So this quote is from an incompetent grandstanding prick, even if it could be verified. Strike one.

Bill Maher goes on to quote another person, Dr. Jonah Salk. Presumably he said, "Live virus vaccines against influenza and paralytic polio, for example, may in each instance cause the disease it's intended to prevent."

Dr. Salk developed the Polio vaccine. But nobody knows where this quote developed from. It has no citations, no sources, and no search seems to reveal anything about it. Were it a genuine quote, the citation would be fairly common, and easy to find. It's safe to conclude, until any contrary evidence comes up, that this quote is fake. Strike two.

Besides this, Bill Maher is appealing to authority, even though there are no authority figures in science. Strike three.

Maher doesn't like the idea of being injected with a form of the actual disease you're trying to be cured from. The part he forgets, or at least has been oblivious to, is that the damned virus is DEAD, and that means you can't get sick from it. Do the vaccine preservatives contain mercury? Some of the older ones did, sure. Would that mercury hurt you? Not in such trace amounts. For comparison, you put more mercury into your body from the fillings in your teeth than you do from an entire lifetime of old-fashioned vaccinations, and mercury hasn't been used as a preservative for vaccines in decades.

I'm disappointed. I would think someone like Bill Maher would at least have verified his sources first. But then, his news-gathering technique has always been to gather up as much information as possible, and rely on the truth to ring out through the din of noise. Often, that has worked for him, and worked rather well. In this one case, he has mistaken the noise for the song.

It's time to put this nonsense to bed. Don't trust that professional bimbo Jenny McCarthy. Don't trust the pseudo-scientists who mean well, but get it just plain damned wrong. This whole sad, stupid affair would be extremely funny, if only KIDS didn't get KILLED because of it. Vaccinate your kids! Do it today!

Otherwise, you're just like the insane couple I wrote about in my last blog [who prayed over their kids instead of taking them to a doctor.](#)

Posted by SaganJr at [1:23 AM](#)

2 comments:



**Stisso said...**

Holy hell. I'm in the middle of writing my PhD comprehensive exam on the vaccination debate, and I just spent over an hour trying to find ANYTHING on this J. Anthony Morris guy, beyond the citation of that quote on numerous anti-vaccination websites. I was just about to give up, and then I found your blog.

I'm having a really hard time finding credible websites that deal with vaccination concerns. Funny how the only reasonable presentation of anti-vaccination sentiment comes from the people they're trying to oppose. The anti-vaccine websites hurt my eyes and my head, and they're the primary reason I changed my mind and decided to vaccinate my kid. Anyway, thanks for the leg up.

[October 21, 2009 12:27 PM](#)



**Tsu Dho Nimh said...**

*Dr. Salk developed the Polio vaccine. But nobody knows where this quote developed from.*

Salk may have been discussing the Sabin vaccine against polio, which is a live (weakened) virus.

[November 19, 2009 2:35 PM](#)

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