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Readers’ Panel

Should children who have not been vaccinated be banned from school?

Social media has fuelled the myths around vaccination and efforts must be made to counteract the damage caused by the discredited claim of a link with autism. But banning children from school is unnecessarily draconian and fails to tackle the underlying problem of lack of understanding. A collaborative approach with families is preferable, providing evidence-based information to ensure children receive the best possible care.

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It is vital that we tackle the decrease in vaccine uptake and increase in rates of vaccine-preventable diseases. But banning unvaccinated children from school is an extreme step that should not be taken lightly. Parents need help and support to make informed decisions, but so much false information is spread via social media. Nurses work hard to provide accurate information to parents – perhaps we need to start focusing this education online, where much of the anti-vaccine information is spread.

Stephanie Nichols is an advanced nurse practitioner working in a GP practice in Warwickshire
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Shutting children out of school ultimately punishes them for their parents’ beliefs. Before taking such a heavy-handed approach we must exhaust all other options. Education is vital in debunking the myths about vaccines, and if children are excluded from school there is a risk of perpetuating this issue. Targeting information online could help, as could raising awareness of the risks of not vaccinating children. Investment in family health and schools is urgently needed.

Grant Byrne is a nursing student in Edinburgh
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Since 2017 we have seen a threefold increase in measles cases. Measles is not a mild childhood illness – it can cause pneumonia and encephalitis – and we need to stop this increase now. Parents who choose not to vaccinate are not only risking the health of their own children, they are endangering the lives of other people’s children. They should be shamed for this, as should those who spread misinformation. We need to counter the lies with the wealth of evidence we have that vaccinations work.

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For more on this issue, go to rcni.com/vaccine-ban

Readers’ panel members give their views in a personal capacity only