

Anti-vaccine film pulled from festival after backlash

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A controversial anti-vaccine film was pulled from the Tribeca Film Festival after a social media firestorm from pediatricians and others erupted.

In the film “Vaxxed: From Cover-up to Catastrophe,” director Andrew Wakefield, M.B., B.S., revives his debunked claims that there is a link between autism and the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine.

Dr. Remley AAP CEO/Executive Director Karen Remley, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H., FAAP, said she is grateful festival leaders removed the film from its lineup.

“Vaccines are one of the safest, most effective and most important medical innovations of our time,” she said. “Claims that vaccines are linked to autism have been disproven by a robust body of medical literature. Any efforts to suggest otherwise would be dangerous to the health of our children, families and communities.”



Wakefield’s infamous 1998 study in *The Lancet* linking autism and vaccines later was retracted, and his medical license was revoked for ethical misconduct. News of his film being included in Tribeca lineup sparked swift backlash on social media from members of the medical and scientific communities who called it inaccurate, irresponsible and dangerous.

Festival co-founder Robert De Niro, who has a child with autism, initially defended the film but changed course just a day later.

“My intent in screening this film was to provide an opportunity for conversation around an issue that is deeply personal to me and my family,” De Niro said in a statement. “But after reviewing it over the past few days with the Tribeca Film Festival team and others from the scientific community, we do not believe it contributes to or furthers the discussion I had hoped for.”



Dr. Dreyer AAP President Benard P. Dreyer, M.D., FAAP, said pulling the film was the right move.

“This was a totally dishonest film spreading lies about measles vaccine and autism that have caused a lot of damage to public health and children around the world, and I was shocked that that film was being shown in the film festival,” he said.

Drs. Remley and Dreyer said the Academy is committed to advocating for families whose children have autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders. In April, the Academy will participate in National Autism Awareness Month.

“As a nation, we must be doing much more to prevent and treat these conditions and support children and families,” Dr. Remley said. “The AAP will continue to advocate for increased investments in federal research dollars and new programs designed to improve diagnosis, treatment and care.”

Resources

- [AAP policy "Recommended Childhood and Adolescent Immunization Schedule — United States, 2016"](#)
- [2016 vaccine schedules](#)
- [Common parental concerns about vaccines](#)
- [Information for parents about vaccine studies](#)
- [Information for parents on immunizations](#)

- [AAP autism website](#)

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