

AAP NEWS

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AAP News, the official newspaper of the American Academy of Pediatrics, is dedicated to informing, educating and inspiring readers on matters related to pediatric health care.

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SECOND OPINIONS

Spanking revisited

The American Academy of Pediatrics has lost its moral compass.

The Conference on The Short- and Long-Term Consequences of Corporal Punishment, held in 1996 and sponsored by the Academy, drew up a consensus statement which reads, in part, "Spanking a child should not be the primary or only response to a misbehavior used by a care giver," and, "Recommendations concerning the discipline of children should be based on a reasoned interpretation of currently available data." Thus, spanking is, at least, reasonable.

In contrast, the *Guidelines for Health Supervision, III*, published in 1997, contains the following baseless consequences concerning spanking:

Spanking models hitting and undermines an effective, cooperative and nurturing relationship with parents. The child learns aggressive and violent behavior and feels violated, shamed and angry. Spanking is only momentarily effective and causes parents to feel ineffective, angry and frustrated.

The Academy has endorsed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which undermines authoritative parenting and promotes permissive parenting, a disaster for children.

At the 1997 Annual Chapter Forum, a resolution supporting legislative efforts to ban partial-birth abortion was endorsed by the majority of attendees. However, on the final day of the Forum and after many participants had left, a parliamentary procedure was used to table the resolution. Such shenanigans destroy trust and comradery.

Academy President Robert Hannemann, M.D., wrote that "Since children have no voice of their own, those who claim to speak for them must be called upon to prove they have children's best interests at heart" [AAP News, July 1997]. In psychosocial issues, it appears that the Academy would rather be politically correct than to have the child's best interest at heart.

Fredric P. Nelson, M.D., FAAP
Philadelphia, Pa.

Vaccine for freshmen

When is the Redbook Committee going to recommend prophylactic meningococcal vaccine for all entering college freshmen and boarding school students?

Our practice began immunizing this population routinely five years ago, and some of the colleges are now recommending it on their health forms. Every year for the past five years I have gotten the panicked phone call from a terrified parent whose student has been exposed to a dormmate who has died of meningococcal disease.

The first case I remember was a fellow high school graduate of my son's who had gone to UCLA. She was involved in an archaeological dig in the Central American jungle when her tentmate became ill and in two days died in her arms before they could be evacuated. Her parents were greatly relieved when I was able to tell them their daughter had had the vaccine two months before and that it did cover Group C disease.

The following year "the call" was from a parent whose son had taken part in a wrestling match at a local boarding school where three students from that match were infected, and two had died.

Three years ago "the call" was from a professor at Catholic University whose two young sons had been exposed to an education student working in the day care center.

Last year it was from my son regarding a local student who had come home from the university he attended and died in our hospital two days later. Needless to say I had made sure my son had the vaccine.

This week "the call" has come from the parents of a freshman at Lehigh whose daughter's hallmate died two days after a party at which students shared a drink.

It is always a tremendous relief when I can reassure the caller that their student has had meningococcal vaccine. I do inform them that the vaccine does not include all the infectious groups of the organism, suggest they try to find out the group, and recommend that they take Rifampin if there has been a significant

exposure. I can truthfully say that these parents are among the most grateful we encounter.

I urge the Redbook Committee to come from behind the curve and make meningococcal immunization for entering college and boarding school students a firm recommendation. I would love not to get any more of these telephone calls, because then I would know that American college students were no longer dying of this largely preventable disease.

Beverley J. Bayes, M.D., FAAP
Falls Church, Va.

Response from Neal A. Halsey, M.D., chairperson of the AAP Committee on Infectious Diseases:

Dr. Bayes has posed an interesting question regarding use of meningococcal vaccine for college students. Outbreaks of men-



PEDIATRIC RHEUMATOLOGY INTO THE NEXT CENTURY

**MARCH 14-18, 1998
THE YARROW HOTEL
PARK CITY, UTAH, USA**

THIS INTERNATIONAL MEETING dedicated to pediatric rheumatology is sponsored by the AAP Section on Rheumatology and the American Academy of Pediatrics. The meeting format will include a variety of plenary sessions, case-based discussions, panel discussions, and poster sessions.

PARK CITY IV OFFERS

- A review of the state-of-the-art in pediatric rheumatology, including basic research, clinical research, and clinical care
- Highlights of the recent advances in pediatric rheumatology
- A unique forum to foster international collaboration
- An opportunity to identify the future directions of the pediatric rheumatology subspecialty
- A stimulus for career development of trainees and young faculty

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