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| 1. Mark your confusion by identifying anything you don’t understand. 2. Show evidence of a close reading (questions, connections, predictions, reactions, summarizing, clarifying, challenging, etc.). 3. Write a 1-page response. Possible Writer’s Notebook questions:  * Should vaccinations be mandatory, or should that decision be left up to parents? Explain. |

**Parents Deserve The Right To Choose — The Vaccine Debate**

By Andrea Raethka*, The Rochester Democrat & Chronicle*, February 3, 2015

Patients *need* to be able to make their own medical decisions. Along with that, parents as agents of their children *need* to be able to make those decisions on their child’s behalf. Once we start making procedures like vaccines or anything else (within reason) mandatory we run the risk of overstepping where boundaries need to exist. If something isn’t guaranteed and proven to kill your child if not done, then we just can’t live in a world where things like vaccines or other preventative procedures are mandatory. If that were to happen we’d run the risk of escalating those mandates every time something is recommended by our pediatricians and big pharmacy companies. Honestly I haven’t agreed with everything my child’s doctor has ever said, nor adhered to every recommendation given by baby center dot com. Parents need autonomy over the choices they make.

That being said, I fully support and believe it's necessary for large institutions to make things like vaccinations mandatory for admission. If you don’t want to vaccinate your kid—that’s ok, just don’t contaminate the rest of the general population. Vaccines stop the spread of dangerous diseases. The recent measles cases in our country are a result of the anti-vaxer culture that has popped up over the past handful of years. Parents shouldn’t be forced to give their children vaccines, but they definitely should be required to get their vaccinations if they want entry into schools, daycares and honestly maybe places like Disney World and high traffic events, amusement parks, museums and airplanes should require documentation before issuing tickets.

I understand the desire to push back against medical procedures that you fear or don’t agree with. I’m totally cool if someone wants to go off the beaten path, go off the grid or choose to refuse to put foreign substances into their bodies and separate themselves from societal norms—I think that’s A-Okay.  But when the rest of us have come to a consensus that these lifesaving medical procedures are protecting us from dangerous disease, but you don’t want to anti-up, you need to not be allowed to contaminate the general population by enjoying the things that could cause the disease to spread to everyone else. Either play by the rules, or seclude yourself from the game. The tradeoff seems pretty fair to me.

**Dr. Sanjay Gupta: Vaccines are a matter of fact**

By Sanjay Gupta*, CNN*, February 5, 2015

Over the last few hours, I have started, scratched out and even abandoned the writing of this op-ed. I couldn't do it. It wasn't there. Didn't feel it.

Something kept nagging at me, and it wasn't until this very moment that I finally figured out what.

It's the idea that this article would be labeled "opinion" or "editorial" in the first place. Sure, there are some topics that seem to lend themselves appropriately to opinion pages:

The President's new budget.

The death penalty.

Is Tom Brady the greatest quarterback ever?

Vaccines, however, which have prevented 6 million deaths every year worldwide and have fundamentally changed modern medicine, should not be on that list.

The benefit of vaccines is not a matter of opinion. It is a matter of fact.

Studies, including a meta analysis of 1.2 million children this past December,show no link between vaccines and autism. That is not a matter of opinion. It is a matter of fact.

That you are 100 times more likely to be struck by lightning than to have aserious allergic reaction to the vaccine that protects you against measles is not a matter of opinion.

That is also a matter of fact*.*

Facts should matter, and science should win, but after 13 years as a medical reporter, I know it is not that simple.

Science often loses the zeal argument to ideology, and in some ways it is easy to understand why.

At the heart of the vaccine argument is the awesome challenge of trying to prove a negative.

If you or your child never gets the disease the vaccine was designed to prevent, there is no surprise. There is no headline. Life goes on.

The flip side, though, is the one in a million child (literally, 1/1,000,000) who has a serious adverse reaction. It is likely to make the news, confirm the worst fears and lead to the enlistment of an army in the fight against vaccines.

It is worth pointing out that 12 out of 10,000 people who take an aspirin are at risk of intracerebral hemorrhage, or bleeding in the brain. People who regularly take too much acetaminophen are the largest group of people hospitalized for acute liver failure. And, on average, one person in the United States dies every year from H20 intoxication, or drinking too much water. And yet, no armies have formed against aspirin, Tylenol or water.

David Katz, from Yale School of Public Health, wrote that it makes no more sense to rant against vaccines because you heard of someone who might have had an adverse reaction than to stop walking because you heard about a pedestrian struck by a car.

In many ways, it is a luxury to be able to have this discussion at all.

Having spent time in West Africa covering the Ebola outbreak, I saw how people hoped, wished and prayed for a vaccine -- to no avail.

On the other hand, the measles vaccine is readily available, and yet vaccination rates in certain areas of the United States are similar to the refugee camps I have visited in Haiti, Pakistan and Jordan.

Yes, parents have a choice in this country.

It is a choice that so many others around the world will never have.

Of course I vaccinated my children. Didn't think twice. Not a big fan of the measles or mumps or rubella -- to name a few very preventable diseases.

And here is where I may lapse for a moment -- into opinion.

The anti-vaccination argument is often snugly wrapped in the "I love my kids" sentiment. And, I find it, well, a little insulting.

To suggest that anyone who vaccinates their kids doesn't love them is a whole new level of lunacy. But here is the fact of the matter, for me.

It's not just because I love my kids that I vaccinated them -- it's because I love your kids as well.