

Immunization Action

C O A L I T I O N

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ABC, Inc.
500 S. Buena Vista Street
Burbank, CA 91521-4551

Dear Sir or Madam:

I was dismayed to learn that ABC is planning to debut the legal drama "Eli Stone" with a script riddled with misinformation about the safety of life-saving vaccines routinely given to infants and children. My understanding, based in part on a *New York Times* article published on January 23, is that lawyer Eli Stone sues a vaccine manufacturer on behalf of the mother of an autistic child. Stone argues that the mercury-containing preservative in a vaccine the child received caused the child's autism. At the end, the jury awards the mother 5.2 million dollars.

Scientific research conducted in the past decade has decisively and repeatedly refuted the claim that childhood exposure to thimerosal, the mercury-containing preservative used in some vaccines, is a cause of autism. Most recently, the medical records of millions of California children who were vaccinated in the 12 years between 1995-2007 were studied. During those years, thimerosal (other than in trace amounts) was removed from all the routinely administered childhood vaccines except influenza vaccine. The California study determined that the incidence of newly reported cases of autism INCREASED during a period when the presence of thimerosal in vaccines was significantly DECREASED. The California study, along with five major studies conducted in the United States, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Sweden, found no association between childhood vaccination with thimerosal-containing vaccines and the development of autism.

The misinformation the Eli Stone script communicates to viewers about the safety of childhood vaccines is irresponsible and dangerous. It will cause many parents to believe that vaccines are potentially hazardous to their children's health. In some instances, healthcare providers will not be able to overcome parents' fears, and the United States could see an increase in rates of life-threatening diseases, as rates of childhood immunization decline. Such fears travel to the international community. Two years ago, Nigeria experienced outbreaks of polio because of misinformation communicated by leaders in the Islamic community about the supposed "dangers" of polio vaccine.

I urge you, as a leader in the production of "Eli Stone," to do the responsible thing. Work to block the airing of this episode. In doing so, you will protect and promote the health of children within the United States and worldwide.

Sincerely,

Deborah L. Wexler, MD

Deborah L. Wexler, MD
Executive Director