

# POLICY FORUM

## *To Inspire Vaccination, Inspire Hope*

### Introduction

You've seen the surveys. You may have even taken one. "Would you be one of the first to take the COVID-19 vaccine if it were offered tomorrow?"

Answers vary, of course: "Yes, if Dr. Fauci said it was safe." "Hell, no!" "I'd like to know more before I answer." "What about side effects? Long term effects?" "Hasn't it been rushed to market?"

It's a not-so-hidden secret that the rate of childhood immunization in North Carolina has been slowly and steadily falling for years, in some areas of the state more than others, leading to periodic regional outbreaks of preventable disease. This issue precedes any concerns about the new COVID-19 vaccine. What do you detect? Denial? Concern? Hesitancy? What about concern for access? Cost? A belief in herd immunity? All of the above? How about hope?

Vaccines undergo strict regulation, development, and testing. Their use is constantly monitored and vaccines are withdrawn and replaced and repackaged for safety concerns when issues arise. The number of vaccines administered in one sitting seems cruel to some. The pathogens don't care. They come when they come. The illness is cruel. The recommended schedule is not arbitrary. It is designed for when the child can make an antibody, and before the pathogen would naturally occur in their lifetime. Whooping cough is dangerous and can be fatal. We give the vaccine before the age it usually strikes.

In a commentary I write in this issue of the journal, I note people we've come to think of as "America's doctors:" pediatricians Benjamin Spock and T. Berry Brazelton, and, these days, Anthony Fauci. It's not just that they're gifted or brilliant. They listened and they heard, and even more interesting, they rarely spoke the language of science. They spoke to people with words they could hear. They earned trust by first seeking to understand, and then spoke to be understood. They inspired hope.

I believe the clinicians, experts, pharmacists, and authors in this issue seek to do the same. NCMJ

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