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Comment on “Parents’ and healthcare professionals’ views and attitudes toward anti-vaccination”

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Dear Editor,

I read the valuable article “Parents’ and healthcare professionals’ views and attitudes toward anti-vaccination” by Karabulut and Zengin (1), focusing on the opinions and experiences of parents and healthcare professionals about childhood vaccination and anti-vaccination, as well as evaluating the ethical aspects of the subject. They clearly state anti-vaccination as a dangerous situation for public health, but also mention it as a sign of “transition from sociality to individuality.” I thank them for their meticulous work.

Karabulut and Zengin (1) very delicately point out the importance of ethical values to being respected by people, so that they can make their own choices freely. They also state that “limiting one’s actions harm other individuals” is not curtailing the freedom, concluding ethically, one should try to balance and protect individual autonomy and social utility and that, vaccination is vital for protecting children’s right to life.

However, for some, “vaccination isn’t just an individual choice; it protects those who can’t be vaccinated” as mentioned in (2). Since the outbreak of Coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) began, there have been many extreme views: Anti-vaccination campaigns hitting record rates, along with the economic difficulties that have caused opportunities for anti-vaccination campaigners to target those who are vulnerable to anti-vaccination sentiment. This article warns that the anti-vaccination community may use anything that would go wrong to create “fear against vaccines” (2).

Exercising autonomy and refusing vaccination may be valid for sensitive personal issues, but if a certain percentage of the population does not get vaccines causing the immunization rate to fall below the herd immunity threshold- varying in every disease, this would harm the population in question (3). Vaccination of a critical number of individuals in a certain population reducing the risk of outbreaks of infectious diseases and protecting other members of the community has also been mentioned by Karabulut and Zengin (1).

The COVID-19 outbreaks had devastating effects on the people’s well-being worldwide, not only health wise but also economically and socially. This would eventually raise the question of whether vaccination should be a topic of discussion, when the present data supports the lighter effects of the COVID-19 (and the variants) on vaccinated individuals, necessitating less intensive care unit hospitalizations and faster recovery possibilities having better overall effects on the people in general.

It is worth considering - while authors very kindly suggest “increasing the awareness of the anti-vaxxers behaviors damaging effect on public health”(1)- whether more direct and strict precautions to be taken for the good of community and public health.

In my opinion, the importance and necessity of education cannot be denied, and providing reliable information to anti-vaccine community is the best way to promote the overall health of the populations, but as this takes a long time, in urgent events such as the unexpected pandemic we faced recently, strict global measures may have to be taken for the good of the people.

Ethics

Peer-review: Internally peer-reviewed.

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