

DRAFT TESTIMONY FOR AUTISM HEARING – 11/28/12

My name is Brian Hooker and I hold a PhD in Biochemical Engineering. I am also the very proud father of a neurologically impaired fourteen-year old young man, Steven. Steven received all of his infant vaccines through 15 months of age and subsequently regressed into what is commonly called autism.

Unfortunately, Steven's story has become much more common and we have to ask: What role, if any, did vaccines play in the emergence of symptoms that will be most likely a life-sentence for a generation of children? A life sentence where these children are unable to speak, are unable to take care of simple bodily functions, are in near-constant chronic pain, and struggle to control their behavior? These children will never realize their full potential and their voices will never be heard.

For all the children still to be born, it remains more than relevant to let *our* voices ask: What role, if any, have vaccines played in the rising epidemic of autism—up from 1 in 10,000 cases in 1983 to a staggering 1 in 88 in 2008? Is it merely a coincidence that during this same time period, the vaccine schedule for children in the US has shot up from 10 vaccinations to 49, making our country the most vaccinated nation in the world?

If we simply say over and over again that vaccines are safe and all the studies prove it, might it be lost on all those busy parents that mercury, through the organic compound thimerosal, is still in various U.S. vaccines, at levels many times the EPA toxic exposure limit?

What does the evidence suggest and are we willing to look at it objectively, fairly, with science as our maiden—and with the kids, not politics our guiding light---despite a public health tradition in this country that gives vaccines protected status?

So far, based on my years of research into what the vaccine studies actually find and how they have been conveniently interpreted; and despite my efforts to engage many at the center of these studies, there appears, sadly, an unwillingness to move beyond protected positions.

And the public is deprived of the full accounting it deserves, as those who might question the safety of vaccines, are marginalized, or worse.

But perhaps that is because the evidence connecting vaccines and their chemical components to neurological impairments, including autism, has not been laid out in the way I am going to reveal now.

While I am the parent of child with what is commonly called autism, my research and scientific focus on the data

around the issue of vaccines and autism is what I believe to be most relevant to all of us here today... and most telling.

I know that your concern for the health and safety of our children is unwavering....and that you will be guided by that, above all else

With that in mind, let me start by saying that over a period of 8 years during which I submitted more than 100 Freedom of Information requests to The Centers for Disease Control--the CDC--most of which were denied, I have nevertheless uncovered evidence of a disturbingly clear connection between infant vaccines and the incidence of neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism.

I have found, further, that many of these vaccines contain mercury in the form of thimerosal at many times the EPA toxic exposure limit.

Despite these facts the CDC consistently denies the existence of a relationship between any vaccine or vaccine component, including thimerosal, and autism, and has worked very hard to bury the fact that thimerosal, a potent neurotoxin, has played a significant role in the current autism epidemic, as shown by their own studies.

On one single day, when my son was 2 months of age, he received 62.5 mcg. of mercury, which exceeded the EPA safe exposure limit by 130 times. Many health professionals will erroneously tell you that mercury has been removed from our vaccines. That is not true. The vast majority of seasonal influenza vaccines distributed in the U.S. today contain 25 micrograms of mercury. The seasonal flu vaccine, along with the H1N1 vaccine recommended in 2009, is given routinely to pregnant women in their first trimester as well as infants down to 6 months of age. Mercury partitions preferentially to the placenta and then to the unborn child, meaning that for the 2010 flu season, these very tiny unborn children were exposed to 50 micrograms of mercury. Interestingly, as reported by the CDC's own VAERS database, the fetal death rate during that particular period jumped by 4250% as compared to the previous "flu season."

I agree with the Oversight and Government Reform Committee's 2003 Mercury in Medicine Report. Mercury is a known, potent neurotoxin. Placing it in maternal and infant vaccines is at best irresponsible and, at worst, criminal.

Even if you are not willing to condemn injecting infants and pregnant women with toxic mercury-containing vaccines, you would expect that the evidence was at least worthy of

the concern and scrutiny of a taxpayer supported health agency like CDC that should be accountable to the public. Yet, over my 8 years and more than a hundred Freedom of Information requests to the CDC regarding the possible link between thimerosal-exposure in infant vaccines and the incidence of neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism, I've encountered a Berlin-wall like resistance. I have been shut out of the information necessary to get to the bottom of the question.

During all these years, the CDC has consistently refused to release the vast majority of the pertinent data, reports and correspondences to me, a father who has a strong right to understand how the CDC conducted its studies and reached its negative conclusions about the relationship between vaccines and autism.

To paint the issue more broadly, the CDC consistently denies the existence of a relationship between *any* vaccine or vaccine component, including thimerosal, and autism, and while doing so, ignores the evidence contained in their own studies.

The initial analysis of the data used in the CDC's own "landmark" study, by Verstraeten et al. published in 2003 in the Journal Pediatrics showed that infants exposed to the highest thimerosal levels in their vaccines at one month of age were 7.6 times more likely to receive an

autism diagnosis. The children exposed to the highest doses of mercury from vaccines were 7 times more likely to receive an autism diagnosis than children who received the lowest doses of mercury!! It is clear that the CDC researchers responsible for this study worked very hard to bury this result via statistical manipulations as even the head researcher, Dr. Thomas Verstraeten entitled an email, regarding the consistent relationship between thimerosal and autism, "It just won't go away." Yes, the relationship between thimerosal and autism won't go away, no matter how expert the experts are at using science to obscure the data.

Later at a secret CDC-vaccine industry representative meeting held in June, 2000, at the Simpsonwood Retreat Center in Georgia, convened to consider these shocking data, CDC scientist Dr. Phillip Rhodes who coauthored the study, stated, regarding the use of data methods to obfuscate the original disturbing analysis of the data, "So you can push, I can pull. But there has been substantial movement from this very highly significant result down to a fairly marginal result."

I was curious as to why the CDC did not publish the initial analysis of the Verstraeten data right away. But these comments by Dr. Rhodes at Simpsonwood made it evident why the CDC needed to revise its inconvenient

initial findings. It took until November 2003 for the final analysis to be released via publication in Pediatrics, as the responsible CDC researchers pushed and pulled for 4 years to make the clear association between thimerosal and autism “go away.”

Although the CDC claimed that their landmark study proved there was no relationship between vaccines and autism, Dr. Verstraeten, who left CDC to work for vaccine manufacturer GlaxoSmithKline in July, 2001, stated in 2004 regarding the study’s final outcome, “The article does not state that we found evidence against an association, as a negative study would. It does state, on the contrary, that additional study is recommended, which is the conclusion to which a neutral study must come.”

Rather than doing additional study, the CDC hired the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to hold a meeting on “Vaccines and Autism” in February, 2004. Representatives of CDC and affiliated organizations presented 5 very flawed epidemiology studies, each of which I could discuss at length. Based solely on these five studies, the IOM Immunization Safety Review Committee issued a report in May 2004 stating, “The committee ... concludes that the body of epidemiological evidence favors rejection of a causal relationship between thimerosal-containing vaccines and autism” and “In addition, the committee

recommends that available funding for autism research be channeled to the most promising areas,” meaning, don’t do any more research on thimerosal and autism. Prior to the meeting, the ISR Committee chairperson Dr. Marie McCormick instructed the committee, “we are not ever going to come down that [autism] is a true side effect.” The CDC specified the outcome of this report before the fact and McCormick made sure the CDC’s specifications were met.

In 2009, this report was invoked by the Special Master in the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program to refuse to award compensation in the autism “test cases” closing the door for any recompense to children maimed by high levels of vaccine-based mercury.

Are you beginning to see the pattern here?

One of the 5 studies used to dismiss the vaccine-autism link was co-authored by Dr. Poul Thorsen, who has collaborated with the CDC from 1998 to the present time. Dr. Thorsen is featured on the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General’s *Most Wanted Fugitive List* as he was indicted on April 14, 2011 by a Federal grand jury on 22 counts of fraud and embezzlement. Dr. Thorsen was installed as the lead investigator for a cohort of scientists from Denmark to investigate the vaccine autism link using Danish

databases. Thorsen's work was funded by a CDC grant of over \$10 million dollars. Most of the funds were disbursed after he coauthored the aforementioned thimerosal-autism paper, which was reviewed prior to publication by Dr. Diana Schendel. While compiling the results for this publication, Denmark researchers deliberately withheld critical data that would have revealed a decline in autism rates in Denmark after mercury-containing vaccines were removed from the Danish childhood vaccine schedule in 1992. The manuscript was initially rejected by the Journal of the American Medical Association and the Lancet, leading medical journals. Dr. Coleen Boyle of the CDC then took the unusual action of advocating for the paper by submitting a letter pushing for expedited review by the journal Pediatrics. The letter was signed by Dr. Jose Cordero, then Director of the CDC National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities.

Dr. Thorsen has coauthored 36 peer-reviewed publications in collaboration with the CDC. Since his indictment by a Federal Grand Jury for fraud, he has coauthored four papers in collaboration with Dr. Schendel.

Why is the branch of the CDC charged with responsibility for autism research collaborating with a fugitive charged with defrauding the very agency, the CDC, engaging in

this critically important research? Why haven't any of his studies been retracted or been subjected to review?

The CDC is playing fast and loose with the truth when it promotes its spin on what scientific studies show about vaccines and autism. What I've disclosed briefly today is the very tip of the iceberg regarding the use of mercury, a known neurotoxin in vaccines.

Please help us expose the malfeasance or downright efforts by the CDC to suppress the truth by bureaucratic spin. There must be a full investigation of the CDC's activities in the vaccine safety program and the National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities.

By pursuing such an investigation, you will help bring to light the information hidden in CDC files, some of which I have obtained and am providing to this committee today, that show our children have been and continue to be exposed to dangerous neurotoxins in vaccines, and that these vaccines have been linked to what is commonly called autism.

There is no acceptable reason why mercury should not be banned from all vaccines. The second most toxic substance known to science has no place being injected into infants, pregnant mothers or any human.

Through your efforts, we can take a long needed step toward ending this horrible epidemic and spare a generation of children from what happened to my wonderful, precious son.

The history of this country is, in many ways, based on the idea that powerful political forces are not greater than the power of an idea, especially when that idea is guided by a search for truth, wherever it takes us, and a mission to protect the most vulnerable in our society. Please speak for them.

Thank you for your attention.