

Your address
Town, state, zip

March 5, 2009

Richard Clark, CEO
Merck & Company
One Merck Drive PO Box 100
Whitehouse Station, NJ -8889-0100

Dear Mr. Clark,

I am writing to express my extreme disappointment regarding Merck's recent announcement to discontinue production and sales of the individual (monovalent) measles, mumps, and rubella vaccines in the United States. I am asking you to seriously consider revoking this decision. I join the ranks of hundreds of thousands of parents who are angry that we are now forced to give our children the combination MMR vaccine. The ramifications of your corporate decision are deeply troubling. They will weaken compliance and serve to further widen the trust gap between parents on the one hand and government and industry on the other. The net effect will undermine public health policy. Perhaps you have not considered the full impact of your decision. Please consider the many ways that parents are connecting the dots. There are urgent reasons why you must continue to manufacture the monovalent vaccines.

Defacto Increase in Number of Mandated Vaccines

Vaccines are mandated for daycare and school admission at the state level. All states mandate one dose each of measles, mumps and rubella vaccines around the child's first birthday. Many states, however, also mandate a second measles vaccine prior to kindergarten. By eliminating the option to administer a single second measles vaccine, you have effectively increased the number of mandated shots these children are required to receive. Some parents will choose to forgo rather than double up.

More Injuries Caused By Combination Vaccines

Combination vaccines are documented to cause more injuries. The motivation behind the development of combination vaccines had less to do with therapeutic benefit or safety and more to do with cost, convenience, compliance and perceived parental discomfort caused by seeing their baby pierced with multiple needles.

Simultaneous Shots Neither Recommended Nor Adequately Studied

Merck and other vaccine makers have never studied the merits and safety of giving multiple shots during the same office visit. You admit as much in your own MMR package insert: "Routine administration of DTP and/or OPV concurrently with measles, mumps and rubella vaccines *is not recommended* because there are limited data relating to the simultaneous administration of these antigens." www.merck.com/product/usa/pi_circulars/m/mmr_ii/mmr_ii_pi.pdf

Physician Flexibility to Individualize Patient Protocol is Eliminated

Doctors must have the option to assess a child's family history and individual circumstances and modify the *recommended* protocol accordingly. Many parents are already working with their doctors and are on track to have their children receive their recommended shots using the monovalent vaccines and a modified timeline. Your decision removes an important option that doctors have to administer the vaccines separately and more safely.

Ethical and Religious Concerns Regarding Ingredients

The rubella vaccine is cultured on aborted fetal tissue. Some will choose to avoid this shot for moral or religious reasons. If the combination MMR is the only option to protect against measles and mumps, some of these parents will skip this vaccine altogether.

Controversy Surrounding Combination MMR Vaccine Affects Compliance

There is a raging debate regarding the safety of the combination measles, mumps and rubella vaccine. Despite attempts by government health officials to dismiss parent fears, public concern remains. Offering the option to use either the combination or single dose vaccines supports the informed consent ethic, strengthens the patient-physician relationship and enhances the integrity of the national vaccine program. Overall compliance is improved. Without the choice, parents will increasingly opt against vaccination rather than be forced into giving their children the combination MMR shot.

There is a robust market for the individual vaccines. Please demonstrate to parents that you understand our legitimate concerns. Merck should act responsibly and continue to offer the individual measles, mumps and rubella vaccines. Thank you.

Sincerely,