What to say about Autism and the President's Executive Order about Vaccines?

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On August 10, 2026 President Trump issued an Executive Order (14420) entitled "Delivering Gold Standard Childhood Vaccine Recommendations for Americans". These recommendations substantially deviate from AAP recommendations in several ways. First, instead of 18 vaccines the AAP recommends for all children, it lists 11 vaccines for all children, and the other 7 either for high risk groups or based on "shared decision making". Second, it recommends that the MMR vaccine be administered in 3 separate shots at separate medical visits, although these separate vaccines are not available in the US. Third, it emphasizes the state "obligation" to provide religious and medical exemptions to immunization requirements to "maximize parental choice".

Officials at an event announcing the order repeatedly suggested a link between vaccines and autism, though it was not mentioned in the order. Many recent studies have demonstrated that there is NO LINK between vaccines and autism, but this misinformation continues to be spread by the Trump Administration. The new recommendations mirror those a federal judge struck down in March but administration officials said they hope states will implement them.

Most importantly, discouraging vaccination based on these false claims would leave children vulnerable to preventable diseases. "There is no new evidence to justify significant changes to childhood immunization guidance," AAP President Andrew D. Racine, M.D., Ph.D., FAAP, said in a statement. "Dozens of studies involving millions of people show there is no link between vaccines and autism, and yet federal leaders continue to promote this outdated, disproven idea to scare families. Today's executive order will do nothing to support families of children with autism or advance understanding of the condition. The only thing I can see is going to happen as a result of the announcement today is the injection of greater amounts of uncertainty and fear and confusion where there doesn't need to be any."

As Dr. Racine noted, as "measles cases reach a 35 year high in the US, and with cold and flu season quickly approaching, the executive order on vaccines in to only disheartening but dangerous".

Pediatricians should encourage families to discuss what they have heard about vaccines, and provide them with information that supports the AAP immunization schedule. Childhood vaccines prevent potentially devastating childhood illnesses, as our current measles outbreak shows, with at least 2 deaths and multiple hospitalizations.

Pediatric Insider News Article



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