

The Anti-Vaccine Movement And Global Immunization

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Vaccination and the Goal of Global Immunization

Vaccines are considered a great win against numerous viral diseases as they help create antibodies in people to help them fight against deadly viruses. Organizations like WHO and UNICEF have made huge efforts to achieve Global Immunization so that people all around the globe can lead healthy lives. Every decade, Immunization is planned, and revisions are made to it so that it can be carried out efficiently and more people can benefit from it. However, there are people known as anti-vaxxers who stand against vaccines as they believe that it is against their religion and rights, believing that vaccines are specifically made to cause harm and control the general public. They refuse to get vaccinated, and as a result, many virus outbreaks (like measles) that have been contained are occurring again. Other setbacks in Global Immunization are war and political instability. This essay will mainly analyze the anti-vaccine movement, provide counter-arguments backed with research to refute these opinions in a respectful manner, and lightly brush upon war and political unrest and their effects on Global Immunization.

Origins and Beliefs of the Anti-Vaccine Movement

Opposition against vaccinations has been around from the time the first vaccine was produced. However, in recent years, there has been an increase in this opposition, and now these people are identified as Anti-Vaxxers. They believe that vaccines go against their religious teachings, as many believe God to be the source of all healing and miracles. This is a very dangerous stance to have, as many have died due to this belief, but if they had been properly educated that vaccines are not against their faith, their lives could have been saved. Others consider it their right to refuse vaccines as they are free individuals who know what is good for them. Since 2009, some states in the US have provided Nonmedical Exemption (NME) to people who have reservations against vaccines due to religious or philosophical beliefs. This has caused an increase in vaccine-preventable diseases and put others in danger as well. According to the 2015 "National Immunization Survey", only 72.2% of children between the ages of 19 and 35 months are fully vaccinated. The rise in NMEs has also caused a rise in virus-preventable diseases, as data collected from areas with high NMEs also had high virus outbreaks, making these places high-risk for everyone, especially immune-compromised people. Due to this inadequate immunization, diseases like measles and whooping cough that had been eliminated in the USA in 2000 have returned back (Olive et al., 2018).

Global Spread of Vaccine Opposition

The Anti-vaccine problem, unfortunately, is not contained in the United States alone; it is a global opposition and tends to get in the way of the Global Immunization Plan every year. In developing countries where there are closely knit communities, it is often the case that the beliefs of one community member are the same as the others in that community. So, in places where religion is seen as the ultimate answer to every problem, strong opposition to vaccination is observed. This opposition, however, can be tackled by educating the religious leaders of those communities and allowing them to convey the benefits of the vaccines through the eyes of religion. This has helped organizations like Gavi, Vaccine Alliance, WHO and UNICEF to reach their Global immunization goals more effectively. It has been recorded in GBD 2017 that the death rate caused by measles and tetanus has decreased by almost half in these countries (Hotez, 2019).

Achievements and Setbacks of the Global Vaccine Action Plan

In 2020, Global Vaccine Action Plan 2011-2020 concluded and plans for the coming decade were devised. In the 2011-2020 plan, many goals were accomplished, but three main setbacks were also identified: war, political instability, and the anti-vaccine movement. War and political unrest have always been big hurdles in the way of global immunization. Warring countries in the Middle East and Central Asia have interrupted vaccine plans numerous times, leading to a resurgence of several vaccine-preventable diseases like measles, malaria, and NTDs. Political unrest in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Venezuela due to government collapse has hindered the efforts of vaccination against Ebola, which is an extremely deadly virus and needs to be contained. The outbreaks in these countries are not only dangerous for them but are also spreading to the neighbouring countries. These setbacks are being addressed in the new plan, and steps to employ vaccine diplomacy are being taken as well. The supply of vaccines is being increased so that more individuals may receive the vaccines, and for that, sustainable investment resources are being considered so the supply and demand can be dealt with adequately (Nnaji et al., 2020).

Vaccine Distribution Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa

Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have faced a low supply of vaccines in previous years, and this weak immunization strategy has become a hurdle in containing many vaccine-preventable diseases. This has caused the Ebola outbreak numerous times, making Africa the most vulnerable continent in the world in regard to health. Efforts have been made to overcome this problem and find a sustainable supply and demand model so that vaccination efforts can be effective in these countries.

With these efforts, immunization has drastically improved in Africa (Vouking et al., 2019).

Policy Responses to Vaccine Refusal

Although developed countries seldom face the threat of war or political unrest, there are still anti-vaxxers that are causing years of progress in immunization to unravel. To deal with this problem, many countries are considering putting a fine on individuals who refuse to get vaccinated. This charge would be based on causing harm to others, as there have been many virus outbreaks. This stance is being supported by many pro-vaxxers as this will ensure the safety of everyone (Belluz, 2017).

Conclusion on Global Immunization Progress

In conclusion, Global Immunization is a great effort against deadly viruses, and when achieved, it will be one of the greatest milestones in human history, but many global problems like war, political instability, and anti-vaccine movements have been hindering progress and, in some cases, undoing it. However, the organizations involved in immunization efforts are taking further and improved steps to overcome these problems and are hopeful that these will be beneficial for everyone.

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