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Challenging Murdoch influence on Australia's coercive vaccination policy - the example of meningococcal B vaccination

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Tue, Aug 13, 2019 at 12:05 PM

To: Andrew Wilson <a.wilson@sydney.edu.au>

Cc: PBAC@health.gov.au, "Hunt, Greg (MP)" <Greg.Hunt.MP@aph.gov.au>, "Boyley, Matthew"

<Matthew.Boyley@health.gov.au>, ATAGI Secretariat <atagi.secretariat@health.gov.au>

For the attention of:

Professor Andrew Wilson

Chair, Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC)

Professor Wilson, there must be an urgent investigation into the Murdoch-run media/News Corp's influence on Australia's taxpayer-funded coercive vaccination policy, and this organisation's conflicts of interest via its association with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, which is involved in vaccine development.

In light of the ongoing aggressive media campaign by the Murdoch tabloids, demanding that the GlaxoSmithKline Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product be added to Australia's taxpayer-funded vaccination schedule, there must be full disclosure of conflicts of interest, i.e. the Murdoch Children's Research Institute's association with the GSK Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product. Rupert Murdoch's mother, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, was involved with the founding of this institute[1], and News Corp and Foxtel are corporate partners of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute[2], which has also received funding from vaccine manufacturers GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis and others.[3] Lachlan Murdoch's partner Sarah Murdoch is on the Board of Directors and is the Ambassador for the Murdoch Children's Research Institute.[4]

Terry Nolan, former Chair of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), is the Group Leader of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute's Vaccine and Immunisation Research Group (VIRGo).[5] Terry Nolan has been involved in research regarding the GSK Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product, research which has been funded by GlaxoSmithKline/Novartis, and listing VIRGo and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute on published papers.[6] Terry Nolan has also been influential at the World Health Organisation, via his membership of SAGE - the 'Strategic Advisory Group of Experts'.

Terry Nolan was recently featured discussing the GSK Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product on the ABC World Today program titled "Experts concerned Australia's vaccine program lagging behind".[7] The ABC did not disclose Terry Nolan's conflicts of interest, i.e. his involvement with GSK/Novartis funded research on the GSK Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product. (See below my previous email to you on this subject (22 July 2019) for a transcript of the ABC World Today segment.)

Professor Wilson, on 4 August 2019 the Murdoch tabloid The Sunday Telegraph ran a front page story with the headline "Prime Minister, if little Donald Peach's life means anything to you...FUND THE JAB" (See copy attached, plus other relevant articles.)

Donald Peach's death is a tragedy, but this sad case must not be used to impose mass vaccination against very rare invasive meningococcal disease with multiple doses of an aluminium-adjuvanted vaccine of questionable effectiveness, as acknowledged in the PBAC's previous rejection of the GSK Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product in its 'subsequent decision not to recommend' outcomes document, dated July 2015. (See highlighted copy attached.)

Professor Wilson, The Sunday Telegraph demands that the Prime Minister "FUND THE JAB", i.e. Scott Morrison. This raises questions about the influence being wielded by the Murdochs on Australia's politicians and taxpayer-funded vaccination policy. Scott Morrison was Social Services Minister in 2015 when the No Jab, No Pay bill was raised. According to a report in the Sydney Morning Herald[8], Scott Morrison had lunch with Rupert Murdoch around that time - did Mr Morrison receive instructions from Mr Murdoch in regards to the No Jab, No Pay bill, which was fast-tracked and enacted as the No Jab, No Pay law in January 2016? Can we have transparency and accountability on this matter?

A Sunday Telegraph editorial published on 28 July 2019 titled "Fund vaccine for this killer" boasts "Since we began the No Jab, No Pay and No Jab, No Play campaigns, immunisation rates have surged and are now at nearly 95 per cent, the level experts say is needed to protect the whole community. This is because we pushed governments to introduce new rules stripping families with unvaccinated children of government payments and giving childcare centres the right to ban unvaccinated kids." (See copy attached.)

As a result of the Murdoch tabloids' aggressive No Jab, No Play vaccination campaign, the community is being forced to be compliant to an ever-increasing number of vaccine products and revaccinations, without consultation with the community. For example, since the Federal No Jab, No Pay law was enacted in January 2016, yet another aluminium-adjuvanted diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis containing revaccination has been added to the schedule for infants around 18 months, making six doses of this vaccination combination for children now, despite the fact there are known problems with the effectiveness of the pertussis component of these vaccinations.

Meningococcal A, C, W, Y vaccination has also been fast-tracked onto the national schedule since the No Jab, No Pay law was implemented. I suggest there should be an investigation into the lobbying for this vaccine product, indeed for every product and revaccination on the current coercive vaccination schedule, the entire schedule is awash with conflicts of interest that must be examined.

Professor Wilson, it is wrong that parents are being coerced to have their children vaccinated and revaccinated with an ever-increasing list of very questionable vaccine products, without the right to consider the risks and benefits of each of these interventions. With the coercive No Jab, No Pay and No Play laws campaigned for by the Murdoch media, the right to 'informed consent' before each of these medical interventions has effectively been trashed.

And now we see the Murdoch tabloids 'demanding' that meningococcal B vaccination for very rare invasive meningococcal disease be added to the taxpayer-funded schedule, where presumably it will be compulsory to access financial benefits and childcare. The Sunday Telegraph editorial "Fund vaccine for this killer" says "This is the last demand from our original campaign that has not been solved, and the Morrison government should know by now we are not going to give up until something is done to protect families". (See copy attached.)

Was this the goal of the Murdoch media all along, i.e. to get the GSK Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product, which is associated with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, onto the taxpayer-funded schedule, and effectively mandated thanks to the No Jab, No Pay and No Play laws campaigned for by the Murdoch media? Was this part of a plan to develop a multi-billion dollar global market for this GSK vaccine product?

Is Prime Minister Scott Morrison going to bow to the demands of the Murdoch media, and add the very questionable GSK Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product to the taxpayer-funded coercive vaccination schedule? Is this how taxpayer-funded vaccination policy is formulated in Australia, at the behest of the Murdoch empire?

The PBAC previously rejected the GSK Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product due to "multiple uncertainties in relation to the clinical effectiveness of the vaccine against the disease when delivered in a vaccination program", among other reasons.[9] Any information provided by GlaxoSmithKline to counter these concerns must be examined very carefully by independent and objective specialists in the area. Mass vaccination against very rare invasive meningococcal disease is highly questionable given it is not a serious risk for most individuals.

I suggest there should be more research into invasive meningococcal disease and why it strikes so few people, what makes them vulnerable? In light of the emerging problems with pertussis vaccination, and the unknown cumulative consequences of the ever-increasing number of aluminium-adjuvanted vaccine products and revaccinations being added to the schedule, we must be very concerned about the potential for 'unintended consequences'.

Professor Wilson, it is the PBAC's primary role "to recommend new medicines for listing on the PBS...no new medicine can be listed unless the committee makes a positive recommendation". The community is relying on the independence of this "expert body appointed by the Australian Government" to objectively evaluate vaccine products for the taxpayer-funded schedule.[10] Yet, the Murdoch tabloids appear to be seeking to circumvent this process, and are 'demanding' Rupert Murdoch's lunch partner[11], Prime Minister Scott Morrison, add the GSK Bexsero meninogoccal B vaccine product to the taxpayer-funded coercive vaccination schedule. This appears to be an abuse of power that is undermining the political process in our liberal democracy.

Australia's taxpayer-funded coercive vaccination policy is in crisis, it is critically damaged by being heavily influenced by parties with conflicts of interest.

We have no effective media to shine a light on this matter. Apart from the Murdoch media's dominance on this subject, other media such as Fairfax/Nine and Seven West Media have largely fallen into line behind the Murdoch tabloids. We have been most badly let down by the taxpayer-funded ABC and SBS, which have utterly failed to provide critical analysis of Australia's taxpayer-funded vaccination policy, and instead provide unquestioning free promotion for vaccine products in their news services.

We must have an urgent investigation into Murdoch influence on our elected politicians and taxpayer-funded vaccination policy, and also conflicts of interest via the Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

Again Professor Wilson, it is alarming that the aluminium-adjuvanted GSK Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product of questionable effectiveness against very rare invasive meningococcal disease may be added to the national taxpayer-funded vaccination schedule, and made compulsory for children to access financial benefits and childcare. I am concerned that you and your fellow members of the PBAC will be persuaded by the Murdoch media, politicians and potentially conflicted industry-funded data to approve this vaccine product for the coercive vaccination schedule - only independent and objective medical and scientific evidence should influence your decision.

I request your urgent response on this matter.

Sincerely

Elizabeth Hart

Independent citizen investigating conflicts of interest in vaccination policy and the over-use of vaccine products.

Attachments:

- Prime Minister, if little Donald Peach's life means anything to you...FUND THE JAB. The Sunday Telegraph, 4 August 2019.
- Fund vaccine for this killer. The Sunday Telegraph, 28 July 2019.
- Why did our child die? Pages 1 and 2. The Sunday Telegraph, 4 August 2019. Includes the article 'Only' nine lives could be saved.
- How much was this little life worth? The Sunday Telegraph, 4 August 2019.
- Anger over son's death. The Sunday Times, 4 August 2019.
- Push for life-saving B vaccine. The Sunday Times, 28 July 2019.
- Push to fund vax after UK success. Sunday Herald, 28 July 2019.
- SA children, students miss out on vaccines News.com 29 July 2019.
- July 2015 PBAC Meeting PBAC Outcomes Subsequent Decisions Not To Recommend Multicomponent Meningococcal Group B Vaccine (4CMENB) Bexsero (Copy attached.)

References:

- 1. See 'History' on the 'About' page on the Murdoch Children's Research Institute website (current as at 12 August 2019).
- 2. See the 'Corporate Partners' page on the Murdoch Children's Research Institute website (current as at 12 August 2019).
- 3. See under Terry Nolan's page on the Murdoch Children's Research Institute website, under 'Funding' tab (current as at 12 August 2019).
- 4. See under 'Our people' on the 'About' page on the Murdoch Children's Research Institute website (current as at 12 August 2019).
- 5. See Terry Nolan's page on the Murdoch Children's Research Institute website (current as at 12 August 2019).
- 6. See for example: 'Antibody persistence and booster response in adolescents and young adults 4 and 7.5 years after immunization with 4CMenB'. Vaccine. Volume 37, Issue 9, 21 February 2019, Pages 1209-1218. The funding disclosure statement on this paper notes: "This study was funded by Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics Inc., now part of the GSK group of companies. GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals SA took responsibility for all costs associated with the development and publishing of the present manuscript." Under 'Declaration of interest', it is noted that 'TN', i.e. Terry Nolan, "received institutional grants for conducting studies from GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals SA". Terry Nolan "also received institutional grants to conduct clinical trials from Pfizer and Novartis". Under 'Acknowledgments', the authors thank Bart van Heertum "for editorial assistance and public coordination on behalf of GSK". See also: Federico Martinon-Torres, Terry Nolan et al. 'Persistence of the immune response after 4CMenB vaccination, and the response to an additional booster dose in infants, children, adolescents, and young adults'. Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics. Published online 9 July 2019. Under 'Funding' it is noted "GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals SA funded all costs associated with the development and the publishing of the present manuscript". Under 'Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest' it is noted 'TN', i.e. Terry Nolan, "is a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) SAGE committee", and Terry Nolan's institution (MCRI), i.e. the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, "received grants for the conduct of clinical trials from the GSK group of companies and from Pfizer".
- 7. Experts concerned Australia's vaccine program lagging behind, ABC World Today, 9 July 2019. (See transcript in email below.)
- 8. Scott Morrison will almost certainly lead the Liberals. The questions is when? The Sydney Morning Herald, 4 September 2015.
- 9. July 2015 PBAC Meeting PBAC Outcomes Subsequent Decisions Not To Recommend Multicomponent Meningococcal Group B Vaccine (4CMENB) Bexsero (Copy attached.)
- 10. See the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) Membership webpage (current as at 12 August 2019).
- 11. Scott Morrison will almost certainly lead the Liberals. The questions is when? The Sydney Morning Herald, 4 September 2015.

----- Forwarded message ------

From: Elizabeth Hart <eliz.hart25@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Jul 22, 2019 at 4:25 PM

Subject: Re: Media blitz promoting meningococcal B vaccination for the taxpayer-funded schedule

To: Andrew Wilson <a.wilson@sydney.edu.au>

Cc: <PBAC@health.gov.au>, Hunt, Greg (MP) <Greg.Hunt.MP@aph.gov.au>

For the attention of:

Professor Andrew Wilson Chair, Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC)

Dear Professor Wilson

It's highly alarming that an aggressive media blitz is underway, lobbying for meningococcal B vaccination to be added to the taxpayer-funded schedule[1], despite the PBAC's previous rejection of meningococcal B vaccination three times for the NIP.

Is this the way vaccination policy is being decided in Australia, at the behest of pharmaceutical industry lobbying via the media until they force their lucrative vaccine product onto the schedule?

In regards to another submission to the PBAC for the Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product, a recent article in the Courier Mail reports "A spokesperson for manufacturer GSK said it had tightened its submission, including new data on the vaccine's proven effectiveness overseas".[2]

What is the substance of this 'new data'? Has it been independently and objectively assessed? Is it openly accessible for public perusal? Can you please provide me with information about this data?

Also, the Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product has an aluminium-adjuvant. I have questioned the evidence backing the safety of the ever-increasing load of aluminium-adjuvanted vaccine products and revaccinations being pressed upon children, e.g. in my email to Kristine Macartney, Director of the National Centre for Immunisation Research & Surveillance, see this link: https://elizabethhart.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/gmail-questionable-claims-for-the-safety-of-aluminium-adjuvanted-vaccine-products-email-to-professor-kristine-macartney-ncirs.pdf I forwarded my email to Professor Macartney in March 2019, but received no response. I also brought this matter to your attention in April 2019 Professor Wilson.

It is also an extremely serious matter that the conflicts of interest of people at the forefront of campaigning for meningococcal B vaccination are often not being properly disclosed to the public in the recent spate of publicity supporting mass vaccination against very rare invasive meningococcal disease.

For example, ABC World Today failed to properly disclose the conflicts of interest of both Robert Booy and Terry Nolan in their report relevant to vaccination policy i.e.: **Experts concerned Australia's vaccine program lagging behind** Tuesday 9 July 2019: https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/worldtoday/experts-concerned-australias-vaccine-program-lagging-behind/11291418

Robert Booy is Chair of the Immunisation Coalition, an organisation which promotes vaccine products and which is funded by vaccine manufacturers, i.e. GlaxoSmithKline, Pfizer, Seqirus (a CSL company), Sanofi, and MSD (aka Merck). Robert Booy is also the medical advisor for Meningococcal Australia, an organisation which lobbies for meningococcal vaccine products to be added to the taxpayer-funded National Immunisation Program Schedule, and which receives funding from meningococcal vaccine product manufacturers GlaxoSmithKline and Pfizer. Robert Booy has been lobbying for the Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine product to be added to the taxpayer-funded schedule for years, see for example the Medical Observer articles 'Call to fund Meningococcal B vaccine' (July 2015), and 'Meningococcal B vax rejection a bad move: expert' (August 2015.) (Robert Booy is also a member of the TGA's Australian Influenza Vaccine Committee, the webpage for which currently does not disclose his conflicts of interest.)

Robert Booy has also been associated with the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance for years, and I suggest his links with industry funding via his research at the NCIRS should be publicly disclosed.

In regards to Terry Nolan, he was previously Chair of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, and I understand he has also been involved with the Bexsero meningococcal B vaccine, e.g. when it was first developed with Novartis.[3] Terry Nolan is associated with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, an organisation which is involved in vaccine development, with funding from GlaxoSmithKline, SanofiPasteur and Novartis Vaccines. The Murdoch Children's Research Institute was originally co-founded by Rupert Murdoch's mother, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch. This organisation, which is involved in vaccine development, also receives funding from the Murdoch-run News Corp and Foxtel. It's significant that Murdoch-run newspapers such as the Daily Telegraph campaigned for coercive vaccination laws via their 'No Jab, No Play' campaign, which was subsequently obligingly embraced by politicians such as Tony Abbott, Bill Shorten and Richard Di Natale, and enacted as the 'No Jab, No Pay' law in January 2016 while Malcolm Turnbull was Prime Minister. As far as I'm aware, the News Corp newspapers did not, and still do not, disclose their conflict of interest in also being associated with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

Given the conflicts of interest of Robert Booy and Terry Nolan, I suggest it's misleading for ABC World Today to report that "...Professors Nolan and Booy have independently backed suggestions for a government rethink" about the way the government and the PBAC decide which vaccines to fund.

Despite the rare cases of invasive meningococcal B being highlighted in the media, even the GSK and Pfizer funded Meningococcal Australia website acknowledges that "Meningococcal bacteria can live harmlessly in our throat and nose. Around 20% of people will be carrying these bacteria at any one time without ever becoming ill ('healthy carriers'). In fact, all of us will carry them at some stage in our lives." http://www.meningococcal.org.au/new-page-1

Do the rare cases of invasive meningococcal B justify the fear-mongering about this disease in the media, including in the newspapers run by News Corp, which is also associated with the vaccine developing Murdoch Children's Research Institute?

If meningococcal B vaccination is added to the National Immunisation Program Schedule, will it be mandated for children under the No Jab, No Pay, and No Jab, No Play laws? Is it ethical to mandate a vaccine product for a bacteria which is generally harmless?

Instead of promoting mass vaccination against a bacteria which is generally harmless, would it not be more valuable to investigate why invasive meningococcal disease strikes so few, and what could be the drivers behind this? Particularly if it's possible that the implementation of vaccination might result in the emergence of new strains, e.g. as suggested by Norman Swan on the ABC Health Report, i.e. "Has immunisation caused the problem, in a sense? In other words, that there is an ecological niche, if you like, for meningococcal infection. You get rid of C because of immunisation, then B emerges, then C and W and Y, because there's just an empty space for it to inhabit, a bit like sparrows...[4]

There are many uncertainties about vaccination, including the unknown cumulative effects of repeated revaccination with aluminium-adjuvanted vaccines, and possibly deleterious effects with being vaccinated regularly throughout life.

Professor Wilson, I again register my alarm at the way vaccination policy is being manipulated by vested interests in Australia, e.g. the recent example of aggressive lobbying via the media for meningococcal B vaccination to be added to the national taxpayer-funded schedule.

I request your response to the matters raised in this email.

Sincerely

Elizabeth Hart

Independent citizen investigating conflicts of interest in vaccination policy and the over-use of vaccine products.

FYI, please see below my transcript of the ABC World Today segment relevant to vaccination policy:

TRANSCRIPT - Experts concerned Australia's vaccine program lagging behind

Introduction: Australia is responsible for one of the world's most advanced systems for vaccine funding that's led to one of the highest immunisation rates in the world. But health experts are now warning that we've begun to lag behind other developed countries, and they say it's stopping Australians of all ages from receiving potentially life-saving injections, as Alison Branley reports.

Alison Branley: 28 year old Juttima Chinnasri went home sick from work in October last year. By the next morning her face was covered in a purple rash.

Juttima Chinnasri: It wasn't normal, like, it's serious.

Alison Branley: She ended up spending a week on life support. When she woke, her lower legs and fingers were black and doctors told her they'd need to be amputated.

Juttima Chinnasri: At that point it was just like it's just hopeless.

Alison Branley: Juttima had meningococcal B strain, the most common strain in Australia. There's been a meningococcal B vaccine available since 2014, but it still hasn't been funded under Australia's National Immunisation Program. University of Melbourne population health expert Professor Terry Nolan says it costs up to \$150 for each injection.

Terry Nolan: For an infant it's a three dose course, so it's a big whack, it's a lot of money. That particular vaccine is funded in other countries.

Alison Branley: Another vaccine still not funded is Shingrix, which immunises the elderly against shingles, a painful condition that turns up only in people who had chickenpox as children. University of Sydney immunisation expert Professor Robert Booy says because Shingrix isn't a live virus vaccine, it's better for people with weakened immune systems. But despite this, it costs sick patients about a hundred dollars for a vaccination.

Robert Booy: Shingles can lead to very severe disease and depression. People who are so severely affected by pain in their face, it can be awful.

Alison Branley: Experts say there's flaws in the way the government and its advisory committee, which decides which vaccines to fund, calculates cost versus benefit. Professor Nolan says these weaknesses have led to significant delays getting funding for a whooping cough vaccine for pregnant women, the flu vaccine for children under five, and the vaccine to protect against meningococcal types a, c, y and w. The vaccine experts will discuss possible changes at a symposium today in Melbourne. The event is being sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline, the maker of Shingrix and meningococcal vaccines. But Professors Nolan and Booy have independently backed suggestions for a government rethink. Professor Booy says the current system could impact the ability to quickly fund other vaccines in the future.

Robert Booy: We're not valuing the impact of vaccination for the general population in saving lives and in preventing disability. We're putting a lower value on vaccines than we are on drugs, like cancer drugs. So it's not a level playing field. The social impact of immunisation can be really substantial. Preventing transmission within families, within the community, can keep people at work, can substantially benefit the economy and can keep families well.

Conclusion: That's vaccine expert Professor Robert Booy, speaking to Alison Branley.

References:

- 1. See for example:
- Experts concerned Australia's vaccine program lagging behind, ABC, 9 July 2019.
- New funding hope for vaccine against killer meningococcal disease, Courier Mail, 19 July 2019.
- Mum's on mission to stop deadly meningococcal disease, Courier Mail, 19 July 2019.
- Meningococcal B is the most common strain in NSW but a vaccine is not government funded, ABC, 19 July 2019.
- Australians dying from meningococcal disease, while free vaccine remains unapproved, The New Daily, 17 July 2019.
- 2. New funding hope for vaccine against killer meningococcal disease, Courier Mail, 19 July 2019.
- 3. Review funded by Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics. Terry Nolan et al. Vaccination with a multicomponent meningococcal B vaccine in prevention of disease in adolescents and young adults. Vaccine 33 (2015) 4437-4445.
- 4. Deadly meningococcal W concerns. ABC Health Report. 30 January 2017.

10 attachments



Sunday Telegraph Sydney Front p 001.jpg 1326K



Fund vaccine for this killer - The Sunday Telegraph 28 July 2019.png 201K

Anger over son's death - The Sunday Times 4 August 2019.png 660K





Push for life-saving B vaccine - The Sunday Times 28 July 2019.png 182K



Push to fund vax after UK success - Sunday Herald 28 July 2019.png 189K

- Why did our child die p 1 The Sunday Telegraph 4 August 2019.pdf
- Why did our child die p 2 The Sunday Telegraph 4 August 2019.pdf
- How Much Was This Little Life Worth The Sunday Telegraph 4 August 2019.pdf
- SA children, students miss out on vaccines News dot com 29 July 2019.pdf 229K
- PBAC outcomes-july-2015-subsequent-decision-not-to-recommend highlighted re GSK Bexsero Men B vax.pdf
 114K