

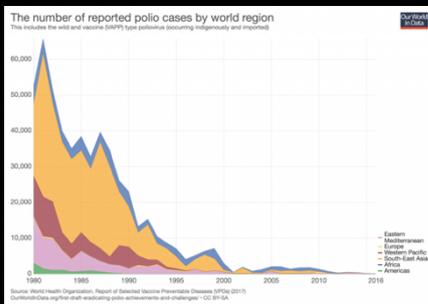
Vaccination:

should it be mandatory?

Vaccination as we know it today has been around since 1798 when the first smallpox vaccine was developed. However, there is evidence that some cultures have been using similar methods since as early as the 1500s. Despite vaccination becoming a common practise, there is still large disagreement on whether it should become mandatory for all.

Do vaccines work?

Over the past 100 years, a series of successful vaccination programmes have helped to almost eliminate diseases that were once a common threat to life. One of the biggest examples of this was the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) started in 1988. Polio is a disabling and life-threatening disease caused by the poliovirus which is highly infectious and saw around 350,000 cases per year in around 125 countries during the 1980s. From 1988 onwards, the GPEI initiated a global vaccination programme against polio reducing the annual cases by 99.99% by 2016 with the virus only remaining in circulation in just three countries and is soon hoped to be eradicated globally.



How does vaccination affect surgery?

When talking about post-operative infection, most people only consider infections to the actual surgical site.

However, one of the biggest risks to geriatric patients is developing the influenza (flu) virus and contracting pneumonia - a life threatening condition that can prove fatal.

However, a 2017 study on geriatric patients in Taiwan showed that patients who received preoperative influenza vaccination had a lower risk of postoperative pneumonia. This could show that a higher uptake of the annual flu vaccine could lead to lower postoperative pneumonia in geriatric patients possibly reducing postoperative mortality.

Is mandatory vaccination effective?

The closest any country has got to mandatory vaccination is introducing laws making it mandatory for children to receive vaccinations before enrolment to state school, such as in the USA. There are some exemptions such as for medical, religious or philosophical reasons and in recent years many states have seen an increase in exemptions that seem to cluster geographically. The US states with the strictest laws have shown to have significantly lower cases of whooping cough and measles (common infectious diseases in children that we vaccinate against) suggesting that if exemptions are harder to achieve, then mandatory vaccination is effective.

Why do people disagree with mandatory vaccination?

Quite often the argument against mandatory vaccination stems at the pillars of medical ethics. For example, every patient has the right to autonomy – the right to decide what happens to their body. Many could argue that forcing someone to receive a vaccination without their consent directly contradicts the right to autonomy

Furthermore, if someone refuses vaccination due to religion forced vaccination would undermine their protection under discriminatory law and refuse them their right to Justice.

