

Suzanne Humphries starts her presentation by stating that, "I was never a fan of vaccines." That is what most people say. Who really wants to be poked with a needle? But her antipathy approaches religious zeal. She rattles off information as if it was all factual. Her polio statistics for 1952 are wrong. In that year there were approximately 58,000 confirmed cases of polio in the U.S. Her polio statistics for 1916 are wrong. She says that this epidemic, which occurred mostly in the northeast U.S. was the country's largest. It wasn't.

Contrary to what she says, polio is not confirmed by how long the paralysis lasts. Polio is confirmed by a lumbar puncture (most accurate) or a stool culture (takes longer and is less accurate). She says the polio season is the late summer through the fall. Actually, polio can occur at any time of year, but the polio "season" usually begins as the weather warms. I know several polio survivors who contracted the disease in May.

She seems to regard polio as a minor ailment, because most who contract the disease have minor symptoms; stomach ache, malaise, etc. She said to her audience, almost flippantly, "we've all experienced that haven't we?" She has obviously never met a severely disabled polio survivor.

Are vaccines 100% perfect? Is anything on this earth 100 % perfect? The answer to both questions is obviously no. What is the risk of having a bad reaction to a vaccine, versus the risk of getting a horrible, devastating, deadly disease?

I sometimes wonder if the anti-vaccine people have ever watched a child die from a vaccine preventable disease. It is often slow and accompanied by physical and mental torment. This torment is shared by the child, the parents, and the medical staff. I have witnessed too much of this.

I am a survivor (just barely) of polio. I spent six months in an iron lung, and three years in a rehabilitation hospital. I know how devastating polio can be. The year I contracted polio, more children died of this disease in the U. S. than of any other communicable disease.

What ended the scourge of polio? A vaccine!

As recently as 1967, there were an estimated two million deaths from smallpox worldwide. What ended the scourge of smallpox? A vaccine!

These are facts! She wants us to believe that polio is caused by DDT, or not eating right, or perhaps something else. She shows graphs that would indicate that polio increased during periods of high DDT use. This doesn't prove anything. Polio occurs more frequently in warm weather. Children eat more ice cream in warm weather. I could draw a graph that shows the correlation between higher consumption of ice cream and higher incidence of polio. Does this mean that ice cream causes polio? I doubt that even Suzanne Humphries would go that far.