MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Maine Department of Health and Human Services



Phone: (207) 287-5388

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Formerly Bureau of Health) 286 Water Street 11 State House Station Augusta, ME 04333-0011 John R. Nicholas Commissioner

Dora Anne Mills, MD, MPH Public Health Director Maine CDC Director

January 15, 2006

Senator Arthur F. Mayo III, Co-Chair Representative Hannah Pingree, Co-Chair Committee on Health and Human Services State House Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 148, An Act To Require Certain Physicians To Provide Information about Thimerosal in Vaccines

Dear Senator Mayo, Representative Pingree, and Members of the Committee:

This is a report to you, as requested as a result of LD 148, to inform you about our efforts to educate health care providers and the public on thimerosal preservative found in some vaccinations. The following activities have taken place since spring, 2005 by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC, formerly Bureau of Health):

- 1. We developed a Power Point presentation on thimerosal and vaccines see attachment.
- 2. We developed a one-page fact sheet on thimerosal and vaccines see attachment.
- 3. We posted both the Power Point and fact sheet on our website's home page (www.mainepublichealth.gov).
- 4. I made a 30-minute presentation before 300 attendees of our annual Immunization Conference in May, 2005 on thimerosal and vaccines, using the Power Point. We disseminated copies of the Power Point and the fact sheet to all attendees.
- I made several other presentations of the Power Point, including at the annual meeting of the Maine Public Health Association and at some medical meetings.
- 6. We disseminated the fact sheet and link to the Power Point by fax to all vaccine providers (~1,200 providers) and to the American Academy of Pediatrics Maine Chapter list serve.

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- 7. We wrote an article for the summer issue of the Epigram with linkages to the fact sheet and Power Point (disseminated to ~2,000 providers).
- 8. I did a number of media interviews on the subject of thimerosal and vaccines, including an aired 12-minute interview with me and author David Kirby on channel 6/2 show "207" and a one-hour cable tv show aired throughout southern Maine on cable access tv stations with Rep. Glynn.
- 9. We produced a 15-minute tv interview format show on the subject for airing this winter on cable access stations throughout the state.
- 10.1 wrote an article on thimerosal and vaccines that was printed in Maine newspapers.
- 11. We plan on continuing to inform health care providers, parents, and the public on the safety of vaccines and to answer their questions about thimerosal.

Sincerely,

Dora Anne Mills, MD, MPH

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Director, Maine CDC

Thimerosal Fact Sheet

What Is Thimerosal?

- It is a preservative used in 30 types of vaccines for 60 years.
- Used in multi-dose vials, it prevents bacterial and fungal contamination.
- It contains ethylmercury, a form of mercury that is probably less toxic and cleared faster from the body than methylmercury, the type of mercury found in some fish (swordfish, tuna).

Do Childhood Vaccines in Maine Contain Thimerosal?

Recommended vaccines for young children in Maine do not contain thimerosal.¹

When Did Thimerosal Come to National Attention and What Did Maine Do?

- In 1999, when the presence of thimerosal in vaccines was highlighted in a report
 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Maine Bureau of Health (now
 Health and Human Services' Public Health) moved quickly to assure that all
 childhood vaccines provided by them were thimerosal-free whenever possible.
- Since 2002, all recommended childhood vaccines have been thimerosal-free except for influenza vaccine. However, as of the 2005 flu season, influenza vaccine for children under 3 is also thimerosal-free.

Is Thimerosal Used In Any Vaccines?

- Some vaccines that are primarily for older children and adults are not available yet without thimerosal.
- Because those with small body weights and developing brains are most susceptible to mercury's effects, the first priority is to reduce mercury exposure in young children.
- Thimerosal-containing vaccines may be unavoidable in epidemics and in other situations where multi-dose vials are needed.

Is Thimerosal Associated with Autism?

- Six studies from Denmark, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States show no association between thimerosal in vaccines and autism.
- For example, after thimerosal was discontinued in the early 1990s in Denmark and Sweden, autism did not decline.
- However, it is clear there is a great need for broad research to determine the causes of and effective treatments for autism.

Where Can I Find Additional Information?

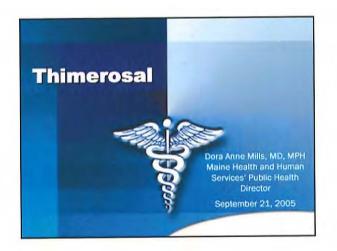
www.mainepublichealth.gov and www.cdc.gov and www.fda.gov

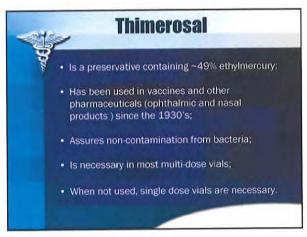
There are no known long-term risks of thimerosal when given in vaccine, but there are very known risks of not vaccinating.

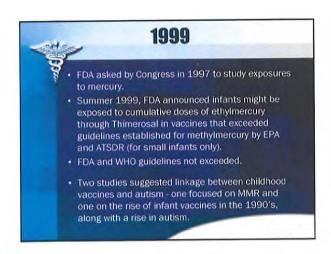
Dora Anne Mills, MD, MPH Director Maine Health and Human Services' Public Health October, 2005

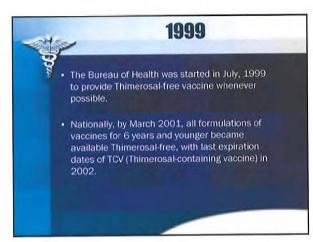
If you have further concerns or comments, please call Maine Immunization Program at 1-800-867-4775

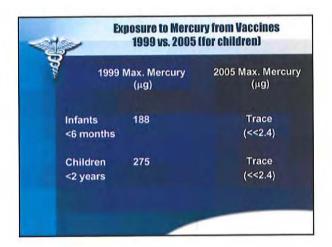
¹ Occasionally, DtaP or Hepatits B vaccines may have trace amounts of thimerosal left over from the manufacturing process.



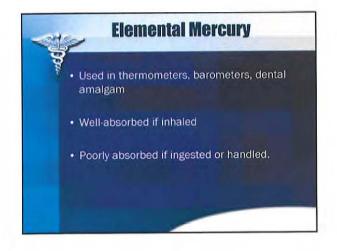




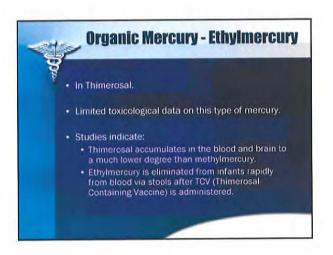


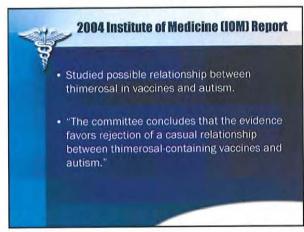




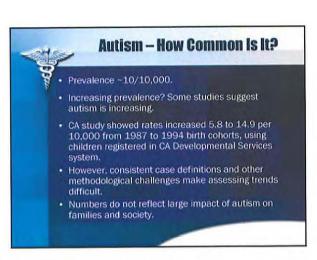


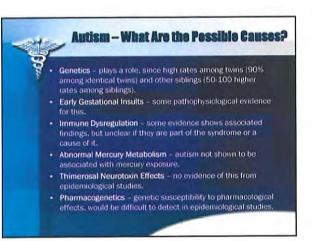


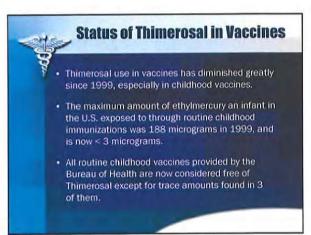












Autism – Challenges to Research Uncertain prevalence and incidence trends Changing case definitions Little knowledge of natural history of autism No strong biological model for autism Lack of diagnostic biomarkers Limited understanding of associated features – immune and gastrointestinal Need more research on causes and treatment of autism!!

