

Judy Wilyman's Reply to the Illawarra Mercury Article:

'Uni responds to anti-vaccine views' 11th June 2012

On the 11th of June Dr. Matthew Berryman, a subscriber to the Skeptics lobby group and a Research Fellow at Wollongong University, misrepresented my comments about the way in which vaccines are being promoted to the public and took these comments to the media. The actual comments that I made about the way in which vaccines are being promoted can be found on the 'Immunisation-Update' page of my website titled 'Conflicts of Interest in Vaccination Policy'.

Dr. Berryman is a specialist in infrastructure technology and not public health policy or vaccination and he made several inaccurate comments to the media about my research. These have been corrected below:

1. He stated 'the arguments I am presenting are unscientific'. This is untrue. The research I am presenting on whooping cough was completed as part of a research project for a Master of Science degree (Population Health) and has been published by the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) and other organisations that use peer-reviewed information. This research can be found on my website.
2. The comments I made with reference to the promotion of vaccines to the public stated the government has been promoting the whooping cough vaccine on 'anecdotal evidence' and I gave an example, the McCaffery family. Anecdotal evidence is the evidence from one individual – it is their experience and it is not representative of the community. This is not the type of evidence that is used in a public health policy and the public is entitled to see what evidence is being used to promote a particular vaccine to the public: for the good of the community. There are other children that have died from vaccines therefore we cannot use individual cases to promote the need for a vaccine to the public.
3. To suggest that "I had misused the case of 4-week-old Dana McCaffery's death from whooping cough against the wishes of her family" is a complete fabrication. The McCafferys agreed to promote the vaccine to the Australian public and received an award (\$1000) from the Skeptics organisation in 2009 for doing this.

The public must be able to openly debate this topic and be consulted on the policies that are implemented. It is important that researchers in universities who are bringing you a different perspective should not be criticized by members of lobby groups for presenting their scientific arguments.

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