

Re: Scientific Community Position about a causal connection between vaccine and autism

On November 26, 2014, the Italian Society of Hygiene, Preventive Medicine and Public Health (Società Italiana di Igiene, Medicina Preventiva e Sanità Pubblica (SIItI)); the Italian Federation of Pediatricians (Federazione Italiana Medici Pediatri (FIMP)); the Italian Society of Pediatrics (Società Italiana di Pediatria (SIP)); the Cultural Association of Pediatricians (Associazione Culturale Pediatri (ACP)); and the Italian Federation of Doctors of General Medicine (Federazione Italiana Medici di Medicina Generale (FIMMG)) issued a press release to reiterate that there is no link between hexavalent vaccine and autism, or between autism and the vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella.

In the press release the scientific community expressed concerns about the impact on the health of Italian citizens following the decisions of some courts which have recognized damage from a vaccine, in absence of any scientific evidence.

The scientific community pointed out that the hexavalent vaccine is used in most European countries and is recognized as essential to prevent six important infectious diseases (polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, invasive disease *Haemophilus influenzae* type B, hepatitis B). Further, the hexavalent vaccine has been administered to tens of millions of children, and no other country has ever arrived at similar conclusions as the first-instance judgment of the Court of Milan did.

In addition, the scientific community highlighted that the mercury present (in the form of ethyl mercury) in trace amounts as a disinfectant in vaccines produced until a few years ago, has never been documented as causing any neurological damage anywhere in the world. However, it has been removed from all vaccines to stop the disinformation campaigns promoted about it by groups opposed to vaccinations.

The scientific community expressed their hope that the judgment of Appeals would establish the truth in line with the scientific literature.

Further, the scientific community pointed out that all decisions (they are first instance's decision; no Court of Appeal has yet delivered a decision on these cases) that recognized a causal connection between vaccines and autism came from a proceeding concerning compensation. Those are particular kinds of proceedings before a labor court and they do not allow any in-depth discussion between the parties.

The scientific community pointed out that none of those decisions were made in a civil action for damage suffered, where there is an in-depth discussion between the parties, and therefore in such proceedings the lack of scientific evidence for any link between vaccines and autism emerges clearly.

Finally, in the press release the scientific community:

- appealed to all parents to continue to respond positively to the offer of the hexavalent vaccine, in the interest of the health of their children and the whole community;
- remembered that the hexavalent vaccine protects their children from diseases that are still deadly nowadays;
- pointed out that in Italy in the last year 5 small healthy infants were KILLED by pertussis;
- reserved the right to require the competent Medical Associations to evaluate under disciplinary action the behaviors of those experts who do not base their evaluation on scientific evidence, resulting in the judges issuing rulings contrary to the truth of the facts;

· asked the Minister of Health to defend in the first instance the universally recognized scientific evidence, that deny any causal connection between vaccinations and autism.