

## Reaction Paper 1 – Measles in America

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### A. Source

Lambert, J. (2019, February 8). Measles Cases Mount In Pacific Northwest Outbreak. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/02/08/692665531/measles-cases-mount-in-pacific-northwest-outbreak>

### B. Summary

National Public Radio published an article called *Measles Cases Mount In Pacific Northwest Outbreak* on February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019 that discussed the current infectious disease outbreaks previously eradicated by herd immunity and vaccines. The article summarizes an interview with Dr. Alan Melnick, public health director the county in Washington which is experiencing a measles outbreak. Dr. Melnick describes the contagiousness and seriousness of measles, consequences of such a disease outbreak in an area with such low levels of vaccination, measures that must be taken to prevent exposure to the vulnerable populations, and current legislation that allows people to exempt their children from vaccines.

Measles is an airborne disease that can remain in the environment for up to two hours. Although the symptoms start as flu like, the rash co-occurs after about 4 days. This means that people can spread the diseases without knowing they have it. The disease can lead to hospitalization, swelling of the brain that leads to permanent damage, and death. In Washington, where the most recent measles outbreak occurred, and in 17 other states, there are laws that allow vaccination exemption based on religion, medical conditions, and personal/philosophical reasons. This means that vaccination rates in public schools are not high enough for herd immunity for those without the vaccine and therefore if a measles case occurs in a school, those without the vaccine must take 21 days off school to make sure they do not develop it.

### C. Personal Reaction

With the advent of vaccinations over two-hundred years ago, and the capability of these such medical miracles have shown their unwavering ability to save an innumerable amount of lives over centuries. I believe this interview with the public health professional in the area where the most recent measles outbreak occurred was informative and shed valuable light on the policy that allows outbreaks like this to occur. It also helps to correct inaccurate claims about vaccinations causing death or permanent damage and inform the average person about everything from symptoms to outcomes. I appreciated the health professional's opinion being asked. I chose this article because as a future health professional I know the importance of vaccinations and it infuriates me that medical misinformation is so easily spread on social media.

Personally, I have three nieces and I am afraid outbreaks like the one in Washington could happen in Wisconsin. Although my nieces are vaccinated, my sister is pregnant and when the baby is born, she will not be able to vaccinate her until around 9 months. I also have friends who were homeschooled and were not vaccinated who would be at risk and contribute to the problem. This type of article is newsworthy especially currently while there is so much misinformation out there about subjects like this. Vaccination is an important health issue, for both vulnerable populations like the poor and uninsured but also for all people as infectious diseases spread independent of socioeconomic status.

#### **D. Community Health Implications**

The community health implications of an outbreak of the measles in large part due to low vaccination rates range from increased medical costs to death. If this issue is not addressed more people will fall for the fallacies spreading on the internet about vaccination. This could lead to outbreaks in other areas and unnecessary deaths. The epidemic of medical misinformation is led by the rising tide of vaccination causing Autism, which has been accounting for the majority, if not all the measles outbreaks across the continental United States. However, the medical field is working on legislation to counteract the anti-vaxxers, providing a society where science is at the forefront. The interview article itself, along with many others in mainstream media, has provided a way to combat low vaccination rates and medical

misinformation that has littered the internet. To further improve the conditions reliable sources need to be promoted on a widescale.