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Vaccination in the Context of Bioethics

(summary)

Key words: vaccination, bioethics, conflict, discussion, homeopathy, virology, infectious diseases, immunization, postvaccinal complications

Abstract: The article analyzes the situation of children vaccination, developed in recent decades: according to surveys in relation to vaccination Russian society is divided into approximately equal number of opponents of vaccination, supporters of vaccination and oscillating middle. There is formed an “antivaccination movement” as a form of medical dissidence. The author considers the opposite points of view, emphasized that vaccination is just one of the practices of biomedicine in which the individual becomes the object of standard procedures.

The problem of children's vaccination has become significant nowadays. There is a widely developed international movement against vaccines. During the last years many parents in Russia refused vaccination for their children. We don't have official statistics on these refusals but we can estimate that this number is rather large: medical officers estimate that there can be about 4-6 thousand children without any vaccinations in Moscow. In some private schools and kindergartens 50% of children are not vaccinated.

The problem became critical after the recent statement of G. Onishchenko, the Chief Sanitary Inspector of Russia, that all children must be vaccinated in spite of the opinion of their parents. So the question has passed into the political sphere and turned into a conflict between the rights of the individual



and the interests of the society, between rights and responsibilities of parents towards their children and power potential of the state.

All movements and groups of alternative medicine beliefs make a stand against vaccination. Members of the home-birth movement are also very active today. Their leaders led wide propagandistic work against vaccination among future parents. They are sure that Nature cannot make mistakes, so vaccination as an artificial act is very dangerous, especially for infants. Some Orthodox leaders also protest against vaccination defining it as a sin.

Two authors of the books on harm and senselessness of vaccination are very popular among parents – homoeopathist A. Kotok and virologist, member of Russian Committee for Bioethics RAS G. Chervonskaya. A. Kotok in his web-site (<http://www.1796kotok.com>) and his book “Merciless immunization. The truth about vaccines” set homoeopathy against vaccination defining the former as an optimal method of healing and the latter as a useless and detrimental practice. He declared that the method of estimation of vaccination efficiency on the basis of calculation of antibodies is defective. A. Kotok is certain that infectious diseases are programmed by nature and the human immune system needs them. Otherwise, there will be an increase in autoimmune and cancer diseases. We can find some utopian ideas in Kotok’s concept of health: natural delivery, natural breastfeeding, natural healing for all.

G. Chervonskaya – one of the authors of the Federal Law “On Immunoprophylaxis of Infectious Diseases” (1998) – states that all vaccines are of great harm to health, and there are very many postvaccinal complications. The other problem consists of a weak reaction of the immune system. That is why very often vaccination is useless.

In effect, the conflict between advocates and opponents of vaccination is the problem of different world outlooks, different approaches to health and the nature of the human body existing in modern society. Using the example of vaccination we see a struggle between these different approaches: bio- and alternative medicine. A lack of humanitarian studies of human body leads to global embarrassment in modern society and makes the problem of vaccination so acute.



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