

The need for tighter vaccination laws in the United States

Lyndsey Edwards

Introduction:

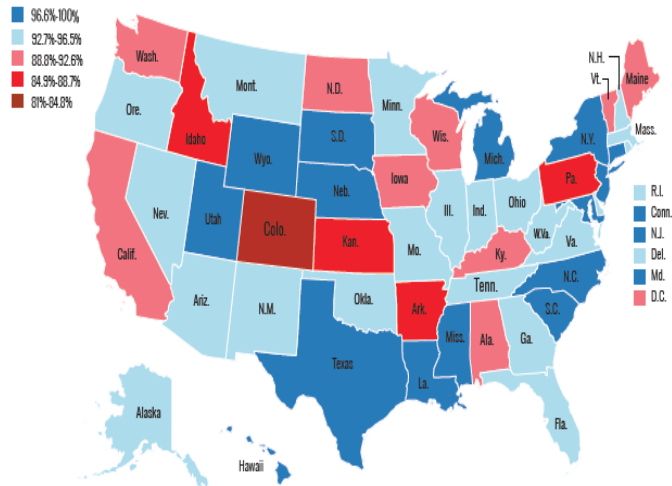
Vaccinations in the United States have been utilized since 1809 (Valdejuli, 2015). Today, vaccinations are both the key treatment and prevention mechanisms against harmful diseases and bacteria. However, massive controversy has been influencing the recent vaccination numbers. In a falsified belief that vaccinations are ineffective and causes diseases such as Autism, many parents are choosing not to vaccinate their children within the public-school system. Despite the fact that the majority of students are still vaccinated, the children who are not receiving these vaccinations are putting the overwhelming population at risk (Hviid, 2019). More cases have been reported of vaccine-preventable diseases within the past decade with the numbers continuing to rise. As a result, this brief encourages policymakers to tighten legislation regarding the vaccinations required for students to attend public schools within the United States in order to prevent a public health crisis.

The Facts:

The belief that it is better to have the disease than to become immune through vaccinations is also one of the most common misconceptions regarding immunizations in today's society. There is a plethora of vaccine-preventable diseases that children are most commonly vaccinated for prior to entering certain grades within the American public-school system. As more parents are prohibiting their children from receiving these vaccinations, additional cases of preventable diseases are being reported within the United States. A specific vaccine-preventable disease that is growing in numbers is the influenza illness that continues to flourish annually. For example, more than 226,000 people are hospitalized from influenza complications including 20,000 children in the US each year, with approximately 36,000 of these individuals dying (CDC, 2016). This shows the urgency of being vaccinated against influenza as it is easily spread within school systems.

Vaccination Rates by State

Percentage of kindergartners vaccinated by state, 2013-2014 school year



Note: Data for Wyoming is from the 2012-13 school year.
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

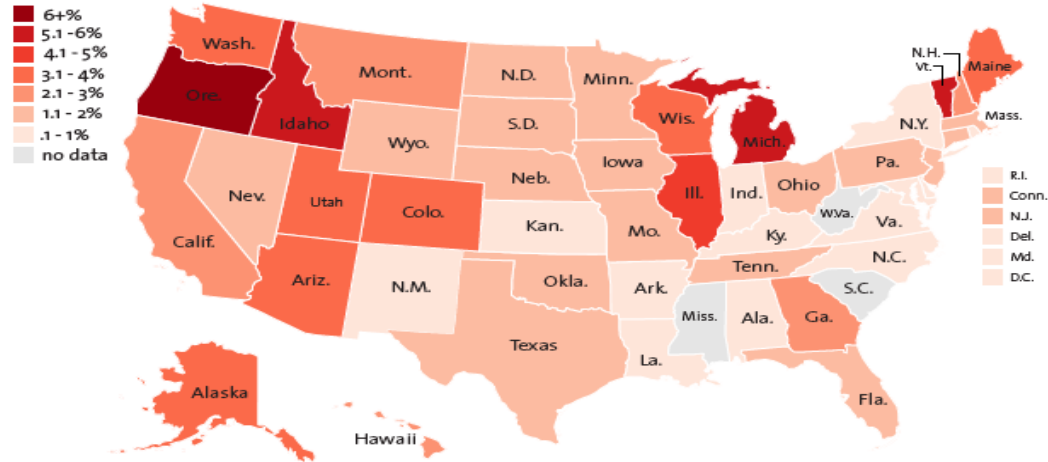
Mother Jones

Relevance:

School districts provide a list of required vaccinations annually that differ between states and cities. However, the majority have specific requirements intended to protect students and faculty against preventable diseases. Not only do school districts require certain immunizations, but they also provide a list of those that are recommended by the CDC. As parents continue to prohibit their children from being vaccinated, more cases of preventable diseases are being reported leading to a potential public health epidemic. However, certain states allow individuals to be granted an exemption, whether medical or religious, that grants them the ability to not receive required school vaccinations. These exemptions risk detrimental effects as the school system allows a plethora of diseases to be spread daily.

Rate of Nonmedical Vaccine Exemptions By State

Percentage of kindergartners with nonmedical exemptions, 2012-13 school year



Note: Children with exemptions may still be vaccinated.
Source: Centers for Disease Control

Mother Jones

California's law regarding vaccination exemptions and policy recommendation

The state of California has passed a law (SB 277) stating that no exemptions for vaccinations will be provided based on religious or philosophical beliefs. The only vaccination exemption approved within the state is a medical exemption (Mellow, 2015). Despite the scrutiny that followed the passage of SB 277, it was a policy decision that was necessary to protect the public. I recommend that the other states within the US adopt California's law preventing exemptions of diseases due to the lack of evidence that they are harmful and the risk of a public health epidemic that could result from individuals no longer being vaccinated.

Works Cited

1. California Legislature. (2019, January 10). Senate Bill 77. Retrieved from California Legislative Information website: http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=20190200SB77