



Put 25 pediatricians into a room and they will usually not agree on much. No real fighting (we're pediatricians after all), just arguments. So it is remarkable that we (the majority of the general pediatricians in Stamford) are all in agreement that the current bill passed in the state legislature regarding childhood vaccines, is bad for everyone (patients, the State of CT, pediatricians) except the big insurance companies.

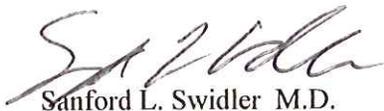
Traditionally, vaccines have been provided to children through three methods. The federal government supplies free vaccines through a program called Vaccines for Children. These are for Medicaid recipients, non insured and underinsured patients. The State of CT runs a program that is funded by some of the bigger insurance suppliers to give a certain number of vaccines (but not all of them) to CT children. This program is variably used by private practices. Finally, vaccines are bought by private pediatricians on the private market through distributors and buying groups. These vaccines are given to children and the cost is appropriately reimbursed by insurance companies based on contractual obligations.

A task force assigned to improve this system worked diligently last year and came up with a number of workable suggestions and improvements. One idea that was brought out at the end of the last session was to *mandate* that all vaccines had to be obtained through a state run system. The concept had many questions surrounding it so the task force tabled discussion until the next legislative year. Unfortunately, when the bill was finalized, it included this as yet to be discussed mandate!

Based on our experience with the current program, the state is absolutely not prepared to run an efficient, smart, inventory ready program. Yet this is vital to getting vaccine supplies to pediatrician's offices when they need them...not when the state makes them available... Undoubtedly this will mean missed vaccination opportunities, lower vaccination rates, and likely multiple office visits to "catch up" with the recommended schedules. Lower vaccination rates invariably results in increases of serious preventable diseases!

Connecticut's stated goal with this bill is to increase vaccination rates for all children in the state. Clinics that exclusively use the current state vaccine program **do a poorer job at vaccinating than private practices that use a mix of vaccine sources**. So with this new bill we are expected to believe that the state program will tremendously increase in size, responsiveness and efficiency, and at the same time this state run program will match or improve on the already excellent vaccine distribution record that private pediatric practices currently maintain. This does not sound believable.

We all agree that immunizations are vital to the continued good health of our patients. In our minds the proposed system has not been well thought out, has not been discussed with the deliverers of the vaccines (us) and will potentially result in a disaster for our children. We believe the best alternative is to REMOVE THE MANDATE, and allow providers to choose which option works best for them and their patients.

  
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