



St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center

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## NEWS RELEASE

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# ST. JOSEPH'S AMAZING HEALTH SURVEY

## Poll Reveals More Than One-Third of Phoenix Parents Concerned about School Inoculations

Despite extensive research that has shown no connection between childhood vaccinations and autism and other health issues, more than one-third of Phoenix area parents say they are worried about the risk posed by the inoculations.

In a recent poll conducted by St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center, 37 percent of Phoenix area parents said they are worried that required vaccines actually might harm their children. Although they voiced concern, a vast majority (83 percent) believe it is a good idea for schools to require vaccinations.

Daniel B. Kessler, MD, an autism expert and director of St. Joseph's Arizona Child Study Center, sees approximately 500 new patients with autism annually. He says he is not surprised at the high percentage of parents who are still worried. "I'm still amazed by the large number of parents who ask me about the connection between autism and vaccines on their first visit to my office," says Dr. Kessler "There have been numerous studies that have shown no link between autism and vaccinations."

The fear of a vaccine-autism connection stemmed from a flawed 1998 study that recently was retracted by a British medical journal. The retraction came after a council that regulates Britain's doctors ruled the study's author acted dishonestly and unethically.

"This recent survey shows that eight out of 10 parents believe that vaccines are a good way to prevent diseases," says Kessler. "So, fortunately any worries about autism are outweighed by their desire to protect their children against life-threatening diseases."

Dr. Kessler says he is seeing an increasing trend in the number of parents who bring their children in for evaluation for autism at a very young age. "This is critically important and can make a huge difference for the child. Parents shouldn't wait to bring their children to a specialist even if their pediatrician has told them 'just wait a year or so and see if a child grows out of his problems'." "If you are concerned and your primary care provider does not share your concern maybe you need to look for another provider," suggests Dr. Kessler.

While there is no cure for autism, Dr. Kessler says he and the team of clinical experts at St. Joseph's are helping parents identify concerns early and make a significant difference in the lives of these children and their families. "Early interventions and the expertise at a hospital like this can make a huge difference."

*The telephone poll was conducted with 400 adults in July 2010 by West Group. The margin of error is plus or minus 5 percent.*