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One Poke Can Safe Lives

I remember the coughing: the horrible, raspy, cough coming from the baby in the waiting room not even a year old. The mother was clinging to the child. You could tell in the mother’s face all she wanted was for her baby to be well again and to stop coughing. I was only a young Medical Assistant extern at the Southridge Instacare, not knowing what was going on. But it was my job to check the baby in before the doctor had the chance to look at the baby. Part of checking in the patient you have to get the vitals signs and the patient history, I asked the parent if the baby was up to date on vaccinations. She told me, “No, I don’t believe in vaccinations”. Then she went right back to focusing on her baby. I put the pulse oximeter on the baby’s foot. The “O2” status was hovering around 89 percent (which is low). I quickly called for the nurse to come and double check the O2 status, to make sure it was working correctly. She then called for the doctor. The doctor told us to put the baby and the mother in a separate room and he would be right in. Five minutes later the doctor came back out and told us what was going on. The baby had pertussis, also known as the Whooping cough and is extremely contagious among people who are not vaccinated or do not have strong immune systems.

Luckily, Pertussis is one of the few diseases that can be prevented. If only the parents had their baby vaccinated, it could have kept the baby from getting sick. And by them not vaccinating, they are decreasing the number of people in herd immunity. The faster herd immunity decreases, the faster diseases that we once thought were gone because of vaccinations are now making their way back into our community (Offit 67) “In the 1940’s about three thousand cases of whooping cough caused seven thousand deaths every year, almost all of them were young children, now fewer than thirty children are dying each year.” (Offit 67) That being said, times are changing. The more parents refuse vaccinations, the more herd immunity is becoming less effective. There are also people who can’t be vaccinated. Like me, for some reason my body has trouble with the Hepatitis B vaccination

Fast forward to now, I work at Riverton Hospital in Surgical Services. In order for me to work there, I have to have all my vaccinations up to date. The Hep. B is normally given three times to people when they are young. But for healthcare employees they are extra precautious and check to see through blood work if you are still immune. Which is not a problem, you just need to get a booster shot and your done, but that is not the case for me. No matter how many times I have gotten the shot; my blood work for Hepatitis B vaccination always comes back as “non reactive”, which means I don’t have protection against Hepatitis B. If I am exposed to somebody who has it, I am more at risk than my coworkers who are immune. It makes me think back to the baby at the Instacare.

The baby was vulnerable to disease that could have been prevented. But it was not the child’s fault. The parents were at fault, but what about me? I don’t have the protection against the disease and I chose to be vaccinated. I am at the will of those who choose not. Even though I don’t like it, I have to deal with it.

I understand why parents don’t want to vaccinate their children. Some are scared of the consequences it could bring to them. “However, a vaccine, like any medicine, is capable of causing serious problems, such as a severe allergic reactions.” (cdc.gov) There will always be risks when it comes to medicine. It just comes down to how each person wants to tackle the topic of vaccination. The same goes for the parents of the baby who had whooping cough. The baby ended being transferred over the Emergency Room and being admitted to the pediatric unit in the hospital.

With my experiences with vaccinations, I have come to conclusion that people have to make the decisions for themselves. I have my strong opinions on the pros of vaccinations.. I learned that you can’t just focus on yours and children’s well being on this subject but thinking of others is part of it..

Works Cited

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