



American Academy of Physician Assistants

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Physician Assistants Stress Continued Need for Children to be Immunized

(Alexandria, VA) – The recent story about Hannah Poling, a young girl diagnosed with autism after receiving a series of vaccines, has raised questions in the public’s mind about the safety of childhood immunizations.

The American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) urges parents to talk with their health care providers about the issue and about the importance of having their children immunized. Today, AAPA President Gregor Bennett, PA-C, from Rockford, Michigan, issued the following statement:

Understandably, there is a lot of confusion around the issue of childhood immunizations. The American Academy of Physician Assistants supports providing vaccines to children as an effective means for keeping preventable disease levels at record low numbers. We believe in the necessity of promoting confidence in vaccines for the continued protection of all children against once-common childhood diseases.

As health care professionals, physician assistants are committed to educating their patients and minimizing fears around childhood vaccinations. We encourage parents to engage in an active dialog with their health providers about the risks and benefits of vaccines. It is important for parents to understand that the benefits of vaccinations in children far outweigh the risks.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM), in its 2004 report on the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism, found no casual relationship between the MMR vaccine and

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autism and fully supports an array of vaccine safety activities. The IOM also recommends that parents should continue getting their children vaccinated using the current recommended dose schedule.

For information about vaccine safety and adverse effects, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/safety/default.htm. To read the AAPA position paper on Immunizations in Children and Adults, visit the Academy's Web site at www.aapa.org/manual/11-Immunizations.pdf.

Physician assistants are licensed health professionals who practice medicine as members of a team with their supervising physicians. PAs deliver a broad range of medical and surgical services to diverse populations in rural and urban settings. As part of their comprehensive responsibilities, PAs conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventive health care, assist in surgery, and prescribe medications.

AAPA is the only national organization to represent physician assistants in all medical and surgical specialties. Founded in 1968, the Academy works to promote quality, cost effective health care and the professional and personal growth of PAs. For more information about the Academy and the PA profession, visit the AAPA's Web site, www.aapa.org

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