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## **An open letter to Louisiana's patients regarding immunizations**

Immunizations should not be politicized.

Healthcare should not be politicized.

Public health should not be politicized.

Your relationship with your physician should not be politicized.

As a patient or caregiver in Louisiana, you have a right to have your questions regarding immunizations answered in a responsible, physician-led, knowledge-driven, evidence-based manner. The very best person to answer your questions is your physician.

To that end, it is important for patients to have physicians and to be reassured that immunizations remain essential to supporting healthy communities. They are one of the most significant medical innovations of our time and have proven to be an invaluable thread in the fabric of our society. Traditional vaccinations have greatly impacted the spread of (and in some cases nearly eradicated): Polio, Smallpox, Tetanus, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis A, Rubella, Hib, Influenza, Measles, Pertussis, Pneumococcal Disease, Rotavirus, Varicella, Diphtheria and Mumps.

In children, vaccinations help to prepare their immune system to recognize and respond to serious diseases. This helps them to stay healthy so they can thrive and develop into adulthood.

Adults are also eligible for vaccines to include boosters for immunizations given during adolescence. In addition to childhood shots and/or boosters, adults are eligible to receive: Human Papillomavirus, Pneumonia, Shingles, and Meningitis.

Physicians providing vaccinations to patients do respect a patient's autonomy and do seek consent. To say otherwise is wrong. However, physicians also have a responsibility to provide patients with accurate information and the risks associated with refusing a vaccine – including illness, hospitalization and the very real prospect of harming vulnerable members of the community who rely on low to non-existent rates of illness to survive.

Public health should serve as a partner to physicians by promoting evidence-based vaccine policy which is in the best interest of the patient.

Here in Louisiana, physicians are today treating whooping cough (Pertussis), a disease that is highly contagious and vaccine preventable.

In our neighboring state of Texas, physicians are treating an outbreak of Measles, a disease that had been declared eliminated in the US in 2000. As vaccination rates drop, outbreaks grow.

There is no replacement for your physician in this conversation! Talk to your physician today.

Louisiana State Medical Society  
Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians  
Louisiana Chapter – American Academy of Pediatrics  
Louisiana Chapter – American College of Emergency Physicians  
Louisiana Chapter – American College of Physicians  
Louisiana Chapter – American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
Louisiana Society of Addiction Medicine