

Lynne McTaggart: All the CDC's Men

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At the point just before it all began to unravel, White House chief counsel John Dean, warning his boss about the difficulty of keeping the lid on all these clandestine activities, famously referred to them as a 'cancer on the presidency'.

A cancer on the CDC

A similar kind of malignancy now engulfs America's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—the US government body invested with protecting the nation against infectious diseases—after fresh revelations of alleged data-tampering in vaccine studies.

In 2004, scientists at the CDC's then National Immunization Program carried out a study intended to settle all the questions surrounding the measles–mumps–rubella (MMR) vaccine (produced by drug company Merck) and a possible link to autism. They'd compared the ages of 624 autistic children at the time of their first MMR vaccination with some 1,800 children who'd developed normally and claimed to have found no significant link between the vaccine and the development of autism, nor any statistically significant increased risk for any racial or ethnic group.

When the study was published in 2004 (*Pediatrics*, 2004; 113: 259–66), it was considered a definitive refutation of the work of British gastroenterologist Dr Andrew Wakefield, whose research had first uncovered a possible link between the triple vaccine and the development of autism and gastrointestinal disorders.

Statistical jiggery pokery

There the story stood for nearly nine years until Brian

Hooker, associate professor of biology at Simpson University in California, decided to take a fresh look at the data. He filed a Freedom of Information Act request for the original data and, while reanalyzing it, he got a call from CDC epidemiologist Dr William Thompson, who'd been a co-author of the 2004 paper and who now felt compelled to set the story straight by offering to collaborate on the new paper.

During multiple phone calls, Thompson revealed some of the statistical jiggery-pokery that had been used to hone the sample size of the children to allow manipulation of the data. The CDC investigators had in fact discovered a 3.4-fold (or 340 per cent) increase in autism for African American boys in the study. However, this risk was never published because, according to Thompson, he and his fellow researchers cherry-picked which participants they wanted to include in their analyses.

As the new study says, the original study by DeStefano et al. limited the total African American cohort to include only those individuals who possessed a valid State of Georgia birth certificate, which decreased the statistical power of their analysis. This reduced the study sample by a whopping 41 per cent, virtually disqualifying most of the African Americans originally included and ultimately skewing the final results to make it appear that the vaccine carried minimal risk.

After numerous discussions with Thompson, Hooker published his re-analysis in early August (*Transl Neurodegener*, 2014; 3: 16). This time, it clearly shows that the African American boys in the study given the MMR vaccine before 24 months of age were more likely to develop autism.

The CDC's deep throat

Thompson's whistleblowing offers shocking evidence of deception and fraud at the heart of the US government agency charged with vaccine safety.

He decided to leak the original correspondence he'd had with Dr Julie Gerberding—then head of the CDC—dated February 2, 2004, sent one week before a pivotal meeting at the Institute of Medicine on vaccine safety and autism. In the letter, Thompson laments the fact that his findings weren't good news: "I will have to present several problematic results relating to statistical associations between the receipt of MMR vaccine and autism," he wrote.

He also urges her to respond to questions raised by Congressman David Weldon in two letters regarding "issues surrounding the integrity of your scientists in the National Immunization Program." And he hints at a cover-up of the truth concerning the safety of vaccines: "I've repeatedly told individuals in the [National Immunization Program Office of Directors] over the last several years that they're doing a very poor job representing immunization safety issues and that we're losing the public relations war."

In a separate 2002 email to CDC officials after their study had been done but before it was published, Thompson also hints at the possibility of a multiple cover-up when writing of his discomfiture over documents being sent by the CDC to the Department of Justice investigating MMR and vaccine damage.

"I don't think anyone has broken the law," he says, but the testimony of one of his report's co-authors before a Congressional committee in 2002 about MMR and autism makes him uneasy, particularly after discovering that the co-author was being represented by a lawyer from another government department—the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD)—which presumably also claims no association between vaccination and autism.

In the email, Thompson announces that he'll be hiring his own lawyer to assure that all the appropriate documents are provided. "My level of concern has also caused me to seriously consider removing my name as an author on the draft

manuscript," he wrote.

This is not the first time the CDC has been caught in the act of questionable activities. For six years, Hooker—himself the father of a 16-year-old with autism who he claims is ‘vaccine-damaged’, and an advisor for the Focus Autism Foundation, which funded his re-analysis—doggedly filed requests through the Freedom of Information Act for the original data on studies supposedly demonstrating that the preservative thimerosal, the mercury-based preservative used in numerous vaccines, was not implicated in autism. After the CDC repeatedly stalled in handing over these supposedly public documents, he was forced to file a lawsuit against them. Ultimately, he discovered that numerous studies supposedly proving the safety of thimerosal were similarly, seriously flawed.

The media black-out

But that’s only the beginning of the cover-up. In the 1970s, when news of the Watergate burglary first broke, the press was instrumental in exposing the lies and deceit at the heart of the US government. Today, in the age of corporate-run media, the press is largely in collusion.

There has been a virtual press blackout of a major act of conspiracy by a government agency—a scam potentially as big as Watergate—and it’s been left to the alternative press, including parent-led autism and vaccination sites, to run with the story.

When news about Hooker’s findings and Thompson’s whistleblowing were posted on the CNN website as an iReport (news posted by viewers), it got more than 45,000 views and 178 comments, largely from people requesting that the channel formally cover the story. Not only did CNN not cover the story, but it also deleted the iReport.

What’s more, once the story began to emerge in the alternative

press, the journal *Translational Neurodegeneration*, which published Hooker's paper, added a red warning box stating that an "expression of concern has been published for this article". The box redirects readers to a comment showing that the journal publisher "has serious concerns about the validity of its conclusions".

Modified limited hang-out

On September 15, 1972, Nixon congratulated John Dean for his role in what another of the President's men called "the modified, limited hangout" in "containing" the Watergate cover-up: "The way you've handled it . . . has been very skilful . . . putting your fingers in the dikes every time that leaks have sprung here and sprung there."

These new revelations suggest that data tampering is business as usual inside the CDC, but that its members are beginning to run out of fingers to plug the leaks.

Nixon himself never entirely atoned for his sins. He had to resign the presidency, but was ultimately pardoned by his successor. And Dr Gerberding, the head of the CDC at the time of the study? She's got a new job—as president of Merck's vaccine division. No doubt she's been replaced by a whole new group of all the president's men.

*Lynne McTaggart is an investigative journalist and author, and a sought-after public speaker whose talks and workshops have transformed the lives of the thousands around the world who have heard her. She edits the monthly health journal **What Doctors Don't Tell You** and was also the editor of the 48-lesson partwork, **Living The Field**, perhaps the most definitive work yet to bridge the worlds of physics and spirituality in its 768 pages.*