

## Many GPs Fear MMR Vaccine Link to Autism

One in eight GPs and a quarter of their practice nurses believe that there is a link between the MMR vaccination and autism, a survey has found. A higher number suspect that the triple vaccination against measles, mumps and rubella can trigger Crohn's disease, a bowel disorder which a number of parents believe developed in their children after they had the injection. The findings, published today in the *British Medical Journal*, will concern health officials trying to convince the public that the inoculation is safe. Children have their first dose between 12 and 15 months and a booster when they start school.

Fears over safety have led to a sharp drop in uptake.

The Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS) has said that 100,000 children are at risk of measles as the school term starts because they had not had even the first dose. The parents' group Justice Awareness and Basic Support campaigns for three separate vaccinations and believes that the combined version has led to 1,800 children developing problems such as autism.

The opinions of doctors and nurses in the North Wales Health Authority were surveyed: 7 per cent of health visitors thought that it was "very likely or possibly" associated with autism, compared with 13 per cent of GPs and 27 per cent of practice nurses. Eleven per cent of health visitors thought there could be a link with Crohn's disease, as did 13 per cent of doctors and 33 per cent of nurses.

Ten of the 460 health professionals did not give their children the second dose. One said: "I personally will not let my children have their second MMR but I don't influence parents. I let them read the factsheet and decide."

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