

big shots

Vaccinations are created simply to protect your health yet they stir up an incredible amount of controversy

BY DR. ART HISTER



theory about that immense doctor/health bureaucrats/pharmaceutical company conspiracy (funny, I never get invited to any of those meetings), I've heard some wild theories. That the minute amount of mercury in the vaccine will cause a huge spike in autism, that the vaccine will lower immunity so anyone who gets it will come down with (fill in your own blanks), and my favourite, that it's all being done to benefit American ex-Secretary of Defense

humid Montreal summers because of a polio pandemic in the community. I can still vividly recall the pictures on our old DuMont TV of kids in iron lungs who had come down with polio.

Anyone under the age of 50 out there ever seen anyone with polio? Of course not, because we now have a terrific vaccine to prevent an illness that still maims and kills hundreds of thousands of kids in countries where they don't have high rates of vaccination.

Polio is just one example of the infectious diseases limited by vaccination, and we may soon add flu to that list

Donald Rumsfeld. Although some of the brainiacs who brought that up on air got their Darth Vaders mixed up and went into hysterics about **Dick Cheney** instead of Rumsfeld (to be fair, what's the diff?). Regardless, it's all nonsense, of course.

So, let's get one thing straight: if you're my age, you will probably say that the greatest medical advance over at least the last five decades is the near-elimination of vaccine-preventable illnesses, particularly in kids.

In 1953 or 1954, for example, I wasn't allowed to play in parks or visit pools during the long, very hot and

Polio is just one example of the infectious diseases limited by vaccination, and if things work out the way I think they will, we may soon add flu to that list, too. Flu still kills 40,000 North Americans every year, but that doesn't register with a lot of folks because flu generally kills older people. And hey, it seems we just expect older people to die of something or other.

Get your shots, folks — you will not only do yourself a lot of good, you will be contributing to the betterment of all of us. ■

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What is it about vaccines anyway?

If aliens were to visit Earth, they'd be amazed that in a world where people pay a couple hundred bucks to see millionaires play a game on ice so poorly that neighbourhood kids could do it better, in a world where the people you elect to watch over your money seem instead to spend that

money without any concern for the future, in a world where millions of kids still die of preventable illnesses — the issue that gets people most riled these days is vaccinations. At least on talk shows, anyway.

Take the brouhaha over the vaccine for so-called swine flu. I'm writing this a couple of weeks before the H1N1 vaccine comes out, and so far, besides the standard *de rigueur*