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Exploring the Debate on Vaccines

A thought-provoking debate in the popular literature concerning vaccination has blossomed in recent years [1-6]. While “traditionalists” support universal immunization against a variety of infectious diseases, many influential individuals hold that vaccinations do far more harm than good. The web sites vactruth.com and anhinternational.org are typical web sites to visit to understand their concerns. More details on the debate, offering commentary on both sides of the issue, can be explored at wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaccine_controversies. In essence, however, those arguing for the universal use of vaccines point to the many millions of lives saved since mass immunization programs were introduced and further argue that resistance to routine vaccination is almost always based on false information. Those arguing against the routine use of vaccines usually either contend that the vaccines are unsafe (often maintaining that vaccine components such as formaldehyde or thimerosal are highly toxic) or alternately argue that governments simply do not have the moral authority to encroach on an individual’s freedom to make medical decisions for themselves or for their children.