

*The following statement is from the National Meningitis Association (NMA) regarding the commentary "The Meningococcal Vaccine – Public Policy and Individual Choices," featured in the December 11, 2003 issue of the NEJM*

On December 11, 2003, the *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)* published a commentary highlighting meningococcal meningitis vaccination public policy and individual choices, focusing on education of parents about the disease and availability of the vaccine to prevent it.

The article written by Paul A. Offit, MD and Georges Peter, MD supports NMA's mission that every parent should be informed about the dangers of meningococcal meningitis and methods of prevention in order to ensure they can make an educated decision about whether to immunize their child. As parents of children who have died or have suffered long-term effects of this disease, NMA strongly agrees that policies and practices should be established to inform parents about the availability of the vaccine and educate children about how the disease is spread, and methods of prevention. The decision to vaccinate could save lives and prevent the devastating consequences our families have faced.

NMA supports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations that college students and parents be educated about the risk of meningococcal disease and the benefits of immunization. NMA is very encouraged and pleased that the CDC has formed a working group to potentially develop recommendations that specifically target education and vaccination for adolescents as well.

The National Meningitis Association is a nonprofit organization founded to inform families, medical professionals, and others about the dangers of meningococcal meningitis and methods of prevention.

Its mission is to help ensure every child is offered protection from the disease through vaccination programs; to support research and development of improved meningitis vaccines and treatments for people stricken by meningitis; and to provide support to survivors of meningococcal meningitis and meningococemia and their families.

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