

Political Affairs Newsletter



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External News

CDC Updates Vaccine–Autism Messaging: Implications for Evidence-Based Communication
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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) quietly revised its vaccine–autism webpage this month, softening its longstanding statement that vaccines do not cause autism. The update, published November 19 during a broader HHS review of federal health webpages, has raised concerns because CDC language strongly influences national public-health messaging and public trust.

Previously, the page stated that studies “show no link between receiving vaccines and developing autism spectrum disorder,” citing a 2012 National Academy of Medicine review and a 2013 CDC analysis. The updated version now reads: “The claim ‘vaccines do not cause autism’ is not an evidence-based claim,” adding that existing studies have “not ruled out the possibility that infant vaccines cause autism.” (Continued on the next page).

Highlights

External News

Discover the *current* updated vaccine messaging from the CDC beginning on page 4.

Member
Spotlight

Be sure to stop by page 6 to learn more about Raashmi Krishnasamy our National Parliamentarian.



It also suggests federal authorities have “ignored” studies indicating a potential link and notes that HHS plans a “comprehensive assessment” of autism’s causes.

The revision closely echoes skepticism voiced by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a long-time critic of federal vaccine policy. Anti-vaccine groups, including Children’s Health Defense, praised the change immediately.

Yet despite the updated language, scientific consensus is unchanged. More than three decades of rigorous evidence — including a landmark 2019 [Danish cohort study](#) of the entire national birth population — has found no causal association between vaccines and autism, a finding supported by multiple meta-analyses. Major health authorities, including the National Academy of Medicine, WHO, FDA, and prior CDC leadership, continue to affirm that vaccines do not cause autism.

Experts have strongly criticized the CDC’s update. Infectious disease physicians [warned](#) that the revision reflects “political pressure overriding scientific consensus,” while the Autism Science Foundation [said](#) it was “appalled,” calling the page “filled with anti-vaccine rhetoric and outright lies.” Public-health leaders worry that ambiguous federal messaging may erode vaccine confidence and fuel misinformation at a time when preventable diseases are resurging. Measles cases have [increased in recent years](#), with outbreaks increasingly linked to undervaccinated communities. Shifts in official language can influence parental vaccine decisions, school immunization compliance, and outbreak control in vulnerable regions.

The CDC also removed a [webpage](#) recommending COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy, stating only that it is being updated — a move clinicians caution may deepen confusion for pregnant patients while established guidance is absent.

These developments highlight ongoing concerns about politicization within federal health agencies and the importance of clear, consistent, evidence-based communication.

In an era of rapid misinformation, public-health messaging grounded in scientific consensus remains essential for maintaining trust, preserving vaccination rates, and protecting community health.

SOMA members wishing to get more involved are encouraged to draft pertinent resolutions and contact their local elected representatives to support evidence-based public-health policy.



◆ Member Spotlight

Alena Khalil, OMS-III



This month's member spotlight is Raashmi Krishnasamy, MPH, OMS III, National Parliamentarian, National Board of Trustees

What is your advocacy passion? My advocacy passion is primarily twofold: (1) advocating for health equity and healthcare access, and (2) elevating community voices. Throughout my career, I've realized that the patients and communities most in need of healthcare are often the ones who struggle the most to access it. Much of this stems from how our systems—health, food, education, and other social determinants—are structured and whose voices are the loudest at the decision-making table. My interest in advocacy comes from a deep-rooted commitment to making healthcare accessible to everyone and ultimately achieving health justice. Additionally, during my time serving as Parliamentarian, I've developed a passion for demystifying policy and advocacy for the student community so that more students feel empowered to get involved. My hope is that by doing so, we can ensure our needs are heard at the decision-making tables that matter.

How did you get involved in advocacy? I first became involved in local advocacy while doing community health work in my hometown, Pittsburgh, and carried this interest with me when I pursued my MPH in Washington, DC. In Pittsburgh, even though my work focused on implementing a blood pressure intervention and improving hypertension outcomes in under-resourced communities, I learned firsthand how food insecurity and access to safe green spaces directly shape individual and community health. Recognizing that these structural factors are shaped by policy, I chose to pursue my MPH in a city where I could learn directly about the relationship between federal and local policymaking and health systems. My passion deepened as I worked with various local and national advocacy organizations in DC. Once I started medical school, I continued expanding my commitment to advocacy by getting involved with SOMA and the AOA.

What advice would you give for someone who is interested in advocacy? My advice is to jump in whenever and wherever you can! Policy and advocacy can feel daunting at first, but as students and future osteopathic healthcare professionals, our voices matter. Our healthcare system is fractured and often harms both patients and physicians. Now more than ever, it's essential that we use our voices to advocate for a better system, both for our patients and for the future of our health workforce. Whether it's community organizing, local advocacy, resolution writing, or attending federal advocacy days, find what excites you and get involved in any way you can. As you explore different avenues, you'll meet incredible people who make the experience all the more meaningful and inspiring.

Nominate an outstanding SOMA member for Member Spotlight [HERE](#)