



Does Immunisation Work?

Childhood immunisation is protecting the youth of the UAE against a large number of deadly diseases, according to doctors at Bareen International Hospital in bin Zayed City in Abu Dhabi. Since the programme was first launched, 95% of Emirati children have taken up the option to protect themselves with the 14 different vaccinations that the hospital offers.

In recent years, concerns about the fact that immunisation may harm more than it helps have led to fluctuating numbers of children being vaccinated. However, revelations that those concerns are without scientific basis have prompted doctors to warn parents to listen to the science and have their children vaccinated.

Misinformation and scaremongering

There are many parents – in both the UAE and countries overseas – who harbour the belief that immunisation contains harmful toxins that can damage the immune systems of youngsters, or that it can precipitate the very diseases it is supposed to prevent. Perhaps the most prominent concern related to immunisation is its link to child autism, which has also been completely discredited.

That particular claim first surfaced in a 1997 article by British surgeon Andrew Wakefield, who asserted a direct correlation between the use of a measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine in UK schools and a correspondent rise in incidences of child autism. Despite being published in the respected medical journal *The Lancet*, the study was later found to have used questionable ethical procedures and committed grave errors in reaching its conclusions, leading to Wakefield being stripped of his license to operate.

“Some parents link MMR vaccines with autism — although no hard scientific evidence has been found to support this conclusion,” [explained Dr Anuradha Ajesh](#), a paediatrician at Bareen. “If vaccine administration will be put to a halt, those contagious, dangerous, and possibly deadly diseases which disappeared over time may start coming back.”

Keeping Emirati children healthy

Pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline is the chief provider of vaccines to the UAE, having supplied the country with over 35 million of them to date. They provide 12 different vaccines which offer protection against 13 different diseases, and uptake



of them has traditionally been very high in the Emirates, with 95% of schoolchildren inoculated.

Despite that very high percentage, Bareen hospital has seen falling numbers of child patients taking up the option of immunisation in recent years. After a record high of 354 vaccinations in 2017, the figure fell to 148 the following year, before rebounding to 256 in 2019. Dr Ajesh believes that parents have a responsibility to inoculate their children in order to prevent the spread and resurgence of certain maladies.

Meanwhile, current concerns about [the rapid spread of the coronavirus](#) from Wuhan in China to numerous countries overseas means that there is an extra emphasis on safeguarding health of the world population, especially its children. The coronavirus, which does not yet have any effective vaccine or cure, has claimed the lives of over 500 people to date.