

## How Independent Are Vaccine Defenders?

*Vaccine Advocates Take Funding From The Companies Whose Vaccines They Endorse*

by Sharyl Attkisson

(CBS) WASHINGTON, July 25, 2008: For years some parents and scientists have raised concerns about vaccine safety, including a possible link to autism and ADD. Many independent experts have sided with government officials and other scientists who say there's no possible connection. But how "independent" are they? The **American Academy of Pediatrics, Every Child By Two**, and pediatrician **Dr. Paul Offit**...these three have...strong financial ties to the industry whose products they promote and defend. The vaccine industry gives millions to the Academy of Pediatrics for conferences, grants, medical education classes and even helped build their headquarters. The totals are kept secret, but public documents reveal bits and pieces.

A \$342,000 payment from **Wyeth**, maker of the pneumococcal vaccine - which makes \$2 billion a year in sales.

A \$433,000 contribution from **Merck**, the same year the academy endorsed Merck's HPV vaccine - which made \$1.5 billion a year in sales.

Also a donor: **Sanofi Aventis**, maker of 17 vaccines and a new five-in-one combo shot just added to the childhood vaccine schedule last month.

Every Child By Two, a group that promotes early immunization for all children, admits the group takes money from the vaccine industry, but wouldn't tell us how much. A spokesman told CBS News: "There are simply no conflicts to be unearthed." But guess who's listed as the group's treasurers? Officials from Wyeth and a paid advisor to big pharmaceutical clients.

Then there's Paul Offit, perhaps the most widely-quoted defender of vaccine safety. He's gone so far as to say babies can tolerate "10,000 vaccines at once." This is how Offit described himself in a previous interview: "I'm the chief of infectious disease at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and a professor of pediatrics at Penn's medical school." Offit...has strong industry ties. In fact, he's a vaccine industry insider. Offit holds a \$1.5 million dollar research chair at Children's Hospital, funded by Merck. He holds the patent on an anti-diarrhea vaccine he developed with Merck; Rotateq. And future royalties for the vaccine were just sold for \$182 million cash. Dr. Offit's share of vaccine profits? Unknown.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, Every Child By Two and Dr. Offit would not agree to interviews.

For years, members of Congress have been investigating financial ties between pharmaceutical companies and the government, doctors and researchers, research hospitals, colleges and universities. Sen. Charles Grassley puts it this way: "I have come to understand that money from the pharmaceutical industry can shape the practices of nonprofit organizations that purport to be independent in their viewpoints and actions."

Although two of the groups receive tax benefits for their non-profit status, they are not required to file...details with the IRS and would not provide them to us, either. And the vaccine companies we asked? They said they would not, or could not give such information as:

- 1) financial support they give to educational institutions, physicians and research projects;
- 2) a list of outside physicians, who are on the payroll...
- 3) an accounting of funding provided to non-profits...such as IOM, NIH, CDC and FDA.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2008/07/25/couricandco/entry4295088.shtml>

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