

VACCIREVIEW



A Pediatrician on the front line of politicized vaccine guidance

Bibliography

Novick DR. A pediatrician's dilemma—pushing back against CDC guidance in the exam room. *N Engl J Med.* 2026;394(7):632-633. doi:10.1056/NEJMp2517911.

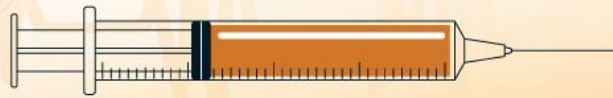
Summary

In this Perspective, Novick describes a clinical encounter with a long-standing patient, now a pregnant mother, who refuses all vaccines for her child, citing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as her source of doubt and confusion. The author, a pediatrician with 30 years of experience, finds herself unusually at a loss for words—not because of the familiar content of vaccine hesitancy, but because the CDC, previously her trusted authority, has become the parent's rationale for rejecting evidence-based vaccination. The essay is set against the backdrop of a “current administration” that has reshaped the CDC's vaccine messaging and policies, including implying a link between MMR and autism and weakening recommendations for hepatitis B and other vaccines, thereby undermining long-standing immunization norms.

In the exam room, the pediatrician attempts to re-center the conversation with the mother on evidence, reassurance, and shared values, while recommending alternative trusted sources such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), her own practice, and local experts. Novick outlines her options: continue to counsel firmly and risk damaging a relationship that spans generations; discharge the family from her practice, an approach that AAP now accepts in some cases; or intentionally “warm the room” and preserve the relationship in hopes of future progress. She chooses the latter in this encounter, pivoting to neutral topics while recognizing the discomfort of walking multiple “fine lines” at once: discrediting federal health agencies while remaining ostensibly apolitical, emphasizing evidence while practicing patient-centered care, and protecting children while contemplating narrowing her patient panel.

The piece closes with the author's own “fierce protective instinct,” informed by personal experience with children lost or critically ill from vaccine-preventable infections, and her fear that the politicization of the CDC will undermine decades of progress in public health.

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Comment

This is a powerful, unsettling snapshot of how politicized guidance from a once-trusted agency can reverberate directly into the exam room and erode vaccine confidence even among previously hesitant-but-persuadable parents. For clinicians, it crystallizes the emerging need to decouple their own authority from that of federal agencies while still advocating strongly—and persistently—for evidence-based immunization.

*Brought to you by Chief Editor **Joe Schmitt**—Supported by AI*