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**BACKGROUND • DISCUSSION TOPICS • RESOURCES**

*Virulent: The Vaccine War* is the latest documentary by the producing/directing team of Laura Davis and Tjardus Greidanus. The film examines vaccine hesitancy and denial, and how anti-vax activists used the Covid-19 pandemic to further their misinformation campaign online and off.

The film also looks at the ways in which the anti-vaccine movement weaponizes history to target Black Americans and other minority communities.

Joining Davis and Greidanus are Project Medical Advisor Dr. Paul Offit, head of Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia’s Vaccine Education Center, and Executive Producer Mark Jonathan Harris, whose films have won three Best Documentary Oscars.

**TOPICS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES**

* What do vaccines do?
* History of vaccines[[1]](#endnote-1)
* Why the World Health Organization called vaccine hesitancy one of the top ten threats to global health
  + What is herd immunity and what role does it play in preventing the spread of infectious disease?
* How social media played a dominant role in the spread of today's anti-vaccination movement fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic
* Distinguishing valid information from misinformation and disinformation
  + Why cherry-picked data, scare tactics, and emotion-packed verbiage often appears as valid and perhaps even more compelling than pro-vaccination rhetoric
* Vaccine ethics[[2]](#endnote-2)
  + Should vaccines be mandated?
  + Informed consent
  + What do we owe each other? Individual action & community responsibility
* Consequences of vaccine hesitancy and denial
  + The commonly held perception that lived experience, individual decision-making and risk assessment, and the ability to create your own expertise with online searches outweighs scientific data
* Suggested Reading:
  + *How Vaccines Work* by David Miles, PhD
  + *Deadly Choices: How the Anti-Vaccine Movement Threatens Us All* by Dr. Paul Offit
  + *Bad Advice: Or Why Celebrities, Politicians, and Activists Aren't Your Best Source of Health Information* by Dr. Paul Offit
  + *The Panic Virus* by Seth Mnookin, Director, Graduate Program, Science Writing, MIT
  + *Polio: An American Story* by David Oshinsky, PhD
* Resources:
  + Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, [Vaccine Education Center](https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center)
  + [Immunize.org](https://www.immunize.org/)
  + College of Physicians of Philadelphia: [History of Vaccines](https://historyofvaccines.org/)

1. History of Vaccines, The College of Physicians of Philadelphia <https://historyofvaccines.org/> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. History of Vaccines, The College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Ethical Issues and Vaccines <https://historyofvaccines.org/vaccines-101/ethical-issues-and-vaccines> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)