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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 POST-GRADUATES AND PROFESSIONALS**

* Common misconceptions about vaccines
* AIMS Approach to Communication (Announce, Inquire, Mirror, Secure)[[1]](#footnote-1): Helping patients make science-based decisions
  + Case Studies: Cori Gentry, Catherine Grinnan (mothers in the film who rejected vaccination for their families, but changed their minds)
* How understanding the history of the anti-vax movements that helped shaped contemporary attitudes can be used to curb the spread of misinformation and build trust in science.
  + Case Study: Andrew Wakefield and the false link between the MMR vaccine and autism[[2]](#footnote-2)
* Cultural perspectives on vaccination
  + Case Study: The Tuskegee Syphilis Study, 1932-1972[[3]](#footnote-3)
  + Case Study: Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and how anti-vaccine activists weaponize history to target African Americans[[4]](#footnote-4)
  + Case Study: The opportunists: Joseph Mercola, DO, who sells untested supplements that he claims boosts the immune systems of humans and their pets[[5]](#footnote-5)
  + Case Study: Celebrities, from Jenny McCarthy, who helped inspire the anti-vax movement through books and appearances on Oprah to rappers like [Nicki Minaj](https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/music/story/2021-09-27/nicki-minaj-vaccine-hip-hop)
* Patient Discussion: Why vaccines are consistent with a natural approach to living
* Lessons from the Covid pandemic
* Suggested Reading:
  + *How Vaccines Work* by David Miles, PhD
  + *Deadly Choices: How the Anti-Vaccine Movement Threatens Us All* by Dr. Paul Offit
  + *Preventing the Next Pandemic* by Dr. Peter Hotez
  + *Stuck* by Heidi J. Larson, PhD
  + *The Panic Virus* by Seth Mnookin, Director, Graduate Program, Science Writing, MIT
  + *Polio: An American Story* by David Oshinsky, PhD
  + *The Doctor Who Fooled the World: Andrew Wakefield's War on Vaccines* by Brian Deer
* 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/)
  + [The Vaccine Confidence Project](https://www.vaccineconfidence.org/)

1. <https://scholarworks.indianapolis.iu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/01e4ba1d-9bee-4f09-95a7-6bf948ee62b0/content> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.bmj.com/content/342/bmj.c5347> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9872801/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.factcheck.org/2021/03/scicheck-rfk-jr-video-pushes-known-vaccine-misrepresentations/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.mcgill.ca/oss/article/controversial-science-news-quackery/murky-mercola> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)