

Every year, I write a column dedicated to giving "Darwin Awards," awards to people who make such stupid decisions that they should eliminate themselves from the human gene pool. These awards are equal opportunity: some, who should know better, from supposedly educated cultures, and others whose ignorance is culturally based.

We have two examples for this column this year: the believers in the US that the century-old childhood vaccinations against Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (chickenpox) causes autism. The other group are those in burgeoning Hindu Nationalist party who are replacing modern medicine with medicines made from cow urine and dung, which they claim can even cure cancer.

We are confronted today with a return of measles, a once childhood disease that was thought to be eradicated, thanks to vaccinating babies. Unfortunately, a now defrocked British doctor (quack) wrote an article in the respected British journal, Lancet, proposing that vaccinations were causing autism, a distressing developmental disease experienced by some children.

Governments and the medical community rallied to expose this fraudulent claim. They yanked the author's license, deleted the article from the journal, and urged the public to continue to get these useful, effective, and beneficial shots. However, the fraudulent claim went on to become one more of the conspiracy theories believed by the gullible or used by those with a vested interest in attacking "science" for their own reasons.

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, for example, Islamist terror cults spread the rumor that polio inoculations were a Western plot to render their children sterile. The consequences of this was to bring back the crippling consequences of polio among their children and retaining a reservoir of this disease that could come back among the rest of us.

Measles are now back among us, thanks to the idiots who believe it is their right to reject this medicine as a "personal choice," and on gutless politicians who are afraid to take them on. Vaccination is a public health issue and should be treated as such. Exceptions to vaccination should have medical reasons only. Personal philosophy is not good enough. We now have a resurgence of measles in tour ships and among adults who had not been vaccinated but were protected by the majority who were. This virulent disease can kill, something it does when introduced to people without protection (ask the Hawaiians and Native Americans).

Our Conspiracy Theory-in-Chief, President Trump, formerly promoted the fraudulent autism theory, along with all other conspiracies that he favored. I am happy to note that this is one theory that he is no longer promoting. The public health officials compelled him to do so.

India's Hindu Nationalists, the Bharatiya Janata Party, has a new business that will flourish despite their electoral wins or defeats. They are producing a range of tonics, potions, pills, and cosmetics sold under the brand name Goratna (jewels of the cow.) Their cow dung face cream, they say, gets rid of pimples. Their products range from shampoos to potions sold as a cancer treatment.

The gullible stop their medical treatments and buy these nostrums, which of course kill them. The medical effectiveness of these moneymakers is based on India's ancient Ayurveda medicines, and on the reverence for cows, sacred to India's 800 million Hindus. Everything about these sacred beasts, such as their urine and dung, must be equally sacred and curative. India's excellent modern medical community is very upset that these horrors are replacing medicines that can truly work.

Deadly beliefs in conspiracy theories are part of a revolt against "experts," the "elite," the "educated," who make the uneducated feel somehow inferior. Also, cynical manipulators make use of this dislike to gain political power.

Modern science has made life on earth so much better for so many of us that we believe it is obvious to accept it. Yet UN doctors treating deadly Ebola in the Congo are being murdered. Ultra-Orthodox Jewish mothers in New York who believe that vaccinations are made from un-kosher materials are now facing the return of measles.

These are all Darwin Award victims of their own stupidity. Unfortunately, there is no

medicine that can cure that.

686 words

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