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COURT AWARD TO COMPENSATE GIRL WHO DEVELOPED AUTISM AFTER VACCINATIONS

A landmark case in which a court ruled for the first time in favor of a child who began to suffer from autism after receiving vaccinations has recently been handed down by the U.S. Federal Claims court. The case has been conceded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the federal agency that oversees the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and prevention (CDC).

The plaintiff in the case was a 9-year-old Georgia girl, Hanna Poling. Filing on her behalf were Dr. Andrew Zimmerman, a pediatric neurologist at Johns Hopkins University and a Maryland geneticist and epidemiologist, Dr. Mark Geier of the Genetic Centers of America. Hanna Poling has exhibited symptoms that have been diagnosed as autism since receiving a series of 5 shots on a single day when she was an infant. Soon after she developed a fever, and in the ensuing months her normal growth and development slowed considerably. Prior to the shots she had been developing as a normal, healthy child.

While this is the first case in history where an award has been granted to a person with autism, it is far from the first case where compensation has been awarded to persons who have been harmed by vaccinations. A Vaccine Compensation Program was put into place in the 1980s to allow persons who claimed damage from vaccines to collect financially. To date, over 2,000 individuals have proved they were harmed in some manner via a vaccination. Resulting settlements have totaled nearly 2 billion dollars in the past 2 decades.

Even in light of this federal court ruling, the U.S. government has not conceded that childhood vaccines cause autism. Even though Hanna Poling will receive compensation, the government officials concluded that the vaccines given to her in 2000 aggravated a pre-existing condition referred to as a mitochondrial disorder. (Mitochondria are tiny bodies in cells that carry their own DNA inherited from the mother and provide the energy that cells need to function.) This event triggered a neurological condition which brought on the symptoms of autism, officials concluded.

Many individuals and several advocacy groups are very concerned and vocal about the fact that scientific and medical evidence are pointing toward Thimerosal (mercury, used as a preservative in vaccines) as the root cause of a tremendous increase in the amount of autistic symptoms developing in children. It is now estimated that 1 child in 150 is showing characteristics of autism. Numerous articles, many produced from studies and opinions from top universities, have implicated Thimerosal in vaccines as a cause of autism. In fact, in 2003, after a 3.5 year investigation, the U.S. House of Representatives concluded that Thimerosal was the cause of the autism epidemic and that the FDA and other health authorities were guilty of "institutional malfeasance" in covering it up, according to one advocacy group the Coalition for Mercury-free Drugs.

Today, despite being banned in Europe and restricted in 7 U.S. states, Thimerosal-containing flu vaccines are still recommended for routine administration to pregnant women and infants. This is done with little or no warning of the presence of this substance in flu and other vaccines.

The court has not yet decided on the amount of damages that will be awarded to Hanna Poling. That decision is expected to be announced in several months. While it is not expected that every child who has exhibited symptoms of autism will now be able to collect damages as a result of this case, people working to ban Thimerosal and to help children with autism see this as a positive move. Some 500 additional cases where autism has occurred with vaccinations are the likely cause as already moving forward in the court system.