


A Proposal for Storytelling: How to Fight Emotion with Emotion in Our Talks with the Vaccine-Hesitant

DIANE ARNAOUT, MD
GENERAL PEDIATRICIAN
COOK CHILDREN'S PHYSICIAN NETWORK - FORT WORTH, TX

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Who The Heck Am I?



- ▶ I'm Dr. Diane Arnaout. Nice to meet you.
- ▶ General pediatrician
- ▶ In practice for 12 years
- ▶ I have discussions with parents daily about vaccines
- ▶ I get parents. I am one.
- ▶ I use social media as a tool to educate

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What The Heck Do I Do?

- ▶ When I'm not seeing patients full-time, I enjoy an educative social media presence
- ▶ 46K+ followers on Instagram and Facebook
- ▶ I educate often about the safety of vaccines
- ▶ I field a lot of anger, fear, and skepticism about vaccines
- ▶ Writing on social media has helped me to "feel out" the vaccine misinformation out there and attack it head-on
- ▶ Facebook and Instagram gave me a blue checkmark which obviously means I'm legit

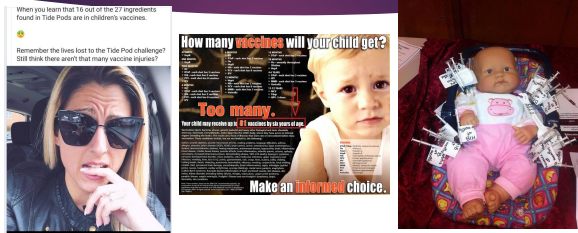
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Why The Heck Am I Speaking on This?

- ▶ I run a busy practice in a demographic that tends to be very active online – the “Google parents” (a tough crowd)
- ▶ When I come across vaccine hesitancy, I have a 99.9% success rate in parents eventually getting all recommended vaccines
- ▶ I have one of the highest HPV vaccination rates in our physician network (a statistic I am very proud of)

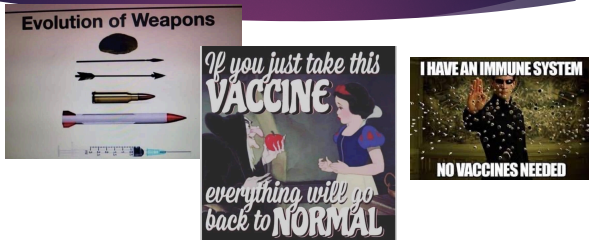
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What Are We Up Against?





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What Are We Up Against?



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What causes a parent to be vaccine-hesitant?

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Which Interventions Work?

- ▶ The most effective interventions employed multiple strategies. The interventions with the largest observed increases (>25%) in vaccine uptake (Outcome 1) were those that (not in order of importance): (1) directly targeted unvaccinated or under-vaccinated populations; (2) **aimed to increase vaccination knowledge and awareness**; (3) improved convenience and access to vaccination; (4) targeted specific populations (e.g. HCW); (5) mandated vaccinations or sanction against non-vaccination; and (6) engaged religious or other influential leaders to promote vaccination.

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Which Interventions Work?

- ▶ "The greatest increases (>20%) in knowledge, awareness or attitudes were observed with education initiatives, particularly those embedding new knowledge into routine processes (e.g. hospital procedures), which were most successful at increasing knowledge and changing attitudes. For both outcomes, those that tailored interventions to specific populations and their specific concerns were most effective."

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So Where Is the Most Work Needed?

- ▶ The Fourth "C"
- ▶ Not so much a component as a fool
- ▶ **COMMUNICATION!**
- ▶ **STORYTELLING** should become a larger component in our day-to-day interactions with vaccine-hesitant individuals



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Why Storytelling?

- ▶ Vaccination often invokes an emotional response from parents. **Let's fight emotion with emotion.**
- ▶ Fears grow with the prevalence of online misinformation
- ▶ Data and evidence, while important to discuss, often won't win over a worried parent
- ▶ Parents don't have the experiences we have had in ICUs, ERs, clinic rooms, and chronic care. Why not share those stories so people understand why we believe in vaccination?

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Storytelling on Social Media – The Dark Side

- ▶ Storytelling is not a new concept in the fight against misinformation
- ▶ Great article written in 2013 by Ashley Shelby and Karen Ernst
- ▶ "Moms Who Vax" and "Voices for Vaccines" contributors



Health Affairs (Washington DC) 2013 Aug 15; 32(16):2761-2767.
 PubMed PMID: 23812488

Story and science

How providers and parents can utilize storytelling to combat anti-vaccine misinformation
 Ashley Shelby and Karen Ernst

Author information • Article notes • Copyright and License Information • [Disclaimer](#)

PMCID: PMC3696261
 PMID: 23812488

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Storytelling Works – On Both Sides

- ▶ The anti-vaccine movement has long understood the compelling nature of telling a story
- ▶ There are countless Facebook posts and groups, Instagram posts telling stories of both real and perceived “vaccine injury”
- ▶ These accounts are often told by parents
- ▶ Medical details on the injury or death are unavailable to the public
- ▶ Attention to detail and more patient information often reveals another cause of the medical issue – but the harm has already been done.
- ▶ Reading stories online is a very common way parents begin to fear and doubt vaccines

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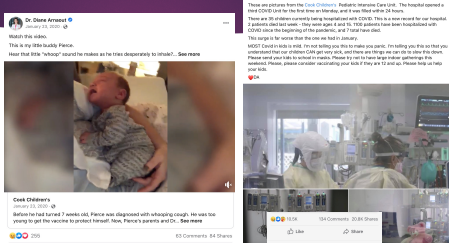
Storytelling on Social Media – The Dark Side

- ▶ “Because of the nature of social media, the validity of these stories and the credibility of the individuals sharing them typically go unchallenged, as in the aforementioned thread. This is because they confirm the biases of those participating in that forum.
- ▶ An outsider stumbling upon the discussion could, in the absence of citation, documentation, or even a request for such, assume greater credibility for the claims than exists” – Shelby, Ernst 2013

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Storytelling on Social Media

- ▶ I have told numerous stories about vaccine-preventable illness online and I urge you to do the same
- ▶ Real stories and real pictures and real videos make these diseases suddenly feel very...real.



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Storytelling on Social Media

- ▶ Your stories WILL CHANGE MINDS
- ▶ Your stories WILL SAVE LIVES

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The "Nothing Happened" Approach

- ▶ It's okay to tell boring stories, too.
- ▶ Boring is reassuring
- ▶ "My kiddo got this vaccine. He did great. Nothing happened."
- ▶ "When I got my COVID shot, I felt great afterwards. Nothing happened."

Moms Who Vax
We believe in doing vaccine honestly, telling the truth, living by the social contract, and protecting our kids and babies.

Monday, September 27, 2022

Moms Who Vax: The Greatest (Non) Story Never Told

My Humble Hero

Among friends and family, I have a bit of a reputation for telling non-medical, but good for the soul stories. I imagine you've been talking to a big, confident, chatty teenager who has been vaccinated (and booster) and you're not talking to a group of their friends. Imagine that their friend is talking to a mom. Imagine that, like her, they have both a doctor and a child. How are you ready for a non-medical story?

As a child and teenager, I received all recommended vaccines, including booster and the chicken pox vaccine. Nothing happened.

When I got pregnant in college, I received the flu shot. My son took it. He was actually a medical student. So, that. Nothing happened or was anything happened to us both.

When my son was two-and-a-half, he received the first hepatitis B shot. Nothing happened.

Links

- [Vaccine for Women: Benefits, Risks and How to Get It](#)
- [Hepatitis B: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Flu Shot: Why You Should Get It](#)
- [Chickenpox: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Hepatitis A: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Hepatitis C: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Hepatitis D: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Hepatitis E: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Hepatitis G: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Hepatitis I: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Hepatitis J: What You Need to Know](#)

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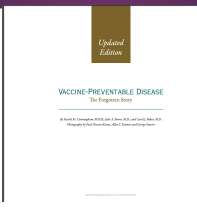

Storytelling in Day-To-Day Interactions

- ▶ Don't minimize a parent's fears
- ▶ Don't be afraid to be relatable
- ▶ Don't be afraid to be vulnerable
- ▶ It's okay to use non-medical terms – your thoughts and ideas will still be valid without all the big words

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Recommendations – Educate Yourself

- I highly recommend the "Vaccine Stories" series from Texas Children's Hospital

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Recommendations – Educate Yourself

- Read up on the vaccines you feel you get the most pushback about
- Learn about the diseases they protect us against
- Read the stories. Tell those stories.
- If you know a personal story about a certain disease, tell it.
- It's okay to make up a scenario to illustrate a point

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Recommendations – Listen to Parents/Patients

- Ask them what they fear
- Ask them why they fear it
- Validate their concerns
- Engage them in a gentle way. Don't be pushy.
- Don't underestimate the "pain factor" and the invasive nature of vaccines

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Recommendation – Use Your Experience As a Provider and a Parent

- ▶ "In twelve years, I've vaccinated a lot of kids. And I've never one seen a single severe side effect. That's a pretty great track record, right?"
- ▶ "This morning we've given this vaccine to 5 other children. They did awesome."
- ▶ "I gave my kids these same vaccines at 2 months. He took a long nap that afternoon, but did great. "

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For Parents Who Want to "Split Up" Vaccines

- ▶ Remind the parent again that you gave your own kid the same sets of vaccines
- ▶ Illustrate the glory of our freakin' awesome immune system:

"You know that paci that you just gave your baby? That thing is covered in about 2 to 3 trillion microbes. Don't you think his immune system can handle 6 or 8 antigens today?"

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Example – The Pertussis Vaccine



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Example – The MMR Vaccine

- ▶ An infamous fraudulent paper erroneously linked the MMR vaccine to autism in 1998
- ▶ The battle since then has been uphill
- ▶ The paper has since been retracted but the damage was already done



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Example – The Flu Vaccine

- ▶ It's easy to assume the flu is a common and mild illness
- ▶ Data will often not get you anywhere with people who think the flu shot is "worthless"



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Example: The COVID vaccine



Use the COVID-19 Information Center for vaccine resources.

❤️👍🔖

👍👍👍 Liked by Halpall and 592 others

and @mrmomof1 is a proud mom of 4 boys vaccinated. #momof4vaccines #nottogether

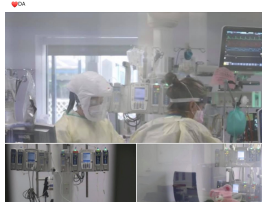
Dr. Diane Aronoff

These are pictures from the Cook Children's Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. The hospital opened a first COVID unit for the first time on Monday, and it was full within 24 hours. There are 35 children currently being hospitalized with COVID. This is a new record for our hospital. 2 patients died last week. They were ages 4 and 10. 100 patients have been hospitalized with COVID since the beginning of the pandemic, and 7 total have died.

This image is far worse than the one we had in January.

MMR2 COVID can help us help. I'm not telling you this to make you panic. I'm telling you this so that you understand that our children CAN get very sick, and there are things we can do to slow this down. Please send our love to school friends. Please try not to have large group gatherings this weekend. Please, please consider vaccinating your kids if they are 12 and up. Please help us help your kids.

❤️👍



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Example – The HPV Vaccine

- This can be a hard vaccine to discuss with families for various reasons
- It isn't "new"
- It's a disease that mostly affects adults – and convincing parents of young people to get it can be a challenge
- It's, like, one of the best vaccines ever.

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How Can Storytelling Compel the Conspiracy Theorist?

- ▶ The Bowser. The King Koopa of vaccine-hesitant.
- ▶ The conspiracy theorist feels there is a "bigger picture" – one of governmental or corporate control
- ▶ Often, this method of thinking can put up some pretty big walls.
- ▶ A gentle story of a patient I knew and lost has been the only method I have found to at least put a small crack in that wall.
- ▶ The conspiracy theorist must now face **the idea that we have a common enemy.**

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In Conclusion

- ▶ Storytelling can be an effective tool in the fight against misinformation
- ▶ Stories of vaccine-preventable illness will remind parents that there is nothing more "natural" than death and disease
- ▶ Don't be afraid to be real, and be relatable.

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