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## Vaccine Policy Statement

We firmly believe in the effectiveness of vaccines to prevent serious illness and to save lives. We firmly believe in the safety of our vaccines.

We firmly believe that all children and young adults should receive all of the recommended vaccines according to the schedule published by the Center for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

We firmly believe, based on all available literature, evidence and current studies, that vaccines do not cause autism or other developmental disabilities. We firmly believe that thimerosal, a preservative that has been in vaccines for decades, but is no longer found in any that we administer, does not cause autism or other developmental disabilities.

We firmly believe that vaccinating children and young adults may be the single most important health-promoting intervention we perform as health care provides, and that you can perform as parents/caregivers. The recommended vaccines and their schedule are the results of years of scientific study of millions of children by thousands of our brightest scientists.

These things being said, we recognize that there has always been and will likely always be artificial controversy surrounding vaccination. Indeed, Benjamin Franklin, persuaded by his brother, was opposed to smallpox vaccine until scientific data convinced him otherwise. Tragically, he had delayed inoculating his son Franky, who contracted smallpox and died at the age of 4, leaving Ben with a lifetime of guilt and remorse. Quoting Mr. Franklin's autobiography:

*In 1736, I lost one of my sons, a fine boy of four years old, by the smallpox....I long regretted bitterly, and still regret that I had not given it to him by inoculation. This I mention for the sake of parents who omit that operation, on the supposition that they should never forgive themselves if a child died under it, my example showing that the regret may be the same either way, and that, therefore, the safer should be chose.*

The vaccine campaign is truly a victim of its own success. It is precisely because vaccines are so effective at preventing illness that we are even discussing whether or not they should be given. Because of vaccines, many of you have never seen a child with polio, tetanus, whooping cough, bacterial meningitis or even chickenpox, or have known a friend or family member whose child died of one of these diseases. Such success can make us complacent about vaccinating. But such an attitude, if it becomes widespread, can only lead to tragic results.

As a result of under immunization, there have been small outbreaks of measles and several deaths from complications of measles in Europe over the past several years. A recent measles outbreak in Pima County occurred when an unimmunized Swiss traveler showed up at Tucson's Northwest Hospital and infected other people there. Since that time, several cases of measles have occurred in Tucson, almost all in unimmunized or inadequately immunized people. This included a two-year-old child who ended up in the hospital in a coma with measles encephalitis. In addition to the health costs of a measles outbreak, the financial cost to the Health Department in containing Tucson's measles outbreak was \$1 million. This cost will be paid by Pima County and Arizona taxpayers.

An unvaccinated child puts our patients at risk: patients with immune system compromise, patients on steroids, patients undergoing cancer or chronic illness treatments.

We are making you aware of these facts not to scare you or coerce you, but to emphasize the importance of vaccinating your child. We recognized that the choice may be a very emotional one for some parents. We will do everything we can to convince you that vaccinating according to the schedule is the right thing to do. If you have questions or doubts about this, please take them to your primary doctor.

Finally, if you should refuse to vaccinate your child despite these efforts, we ask that you find another health care provider who shares your views. We do not keep a list of such providers, nor would we recommend any such physician. Please recognize that by not vaccinating, you are putting your child and others at unnecessary risk for life-threatening diseases and disability, even death.

Thank you for your time in reading this policy and please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about vaccines with your primary doctor.

Sincerely,

The Doctors of Tanque Verde Pediatrics