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Dear Dr. Offit:

Your new book, *Bad Advice: Or Why Celebrities, Politicians, and Activists Aren't Your Best Source of Health Information*, appears poised to repeat one of your favorite arguments, namely, that scientists are the sole trustworthy purveyors of health information. The notion that non-scientists, no matter how educated or credentialed, have nothing to contribute to discussions about health has been a running theme in many of your books and lectures, and particularly in the realm of vaccine safety.

This is the reason you give for continually rebuffing my requests that you participate in a public debate with me about vaccine safety. In recognition of the theme of your new book, I would now invite you to debate three top-flight and extensively published researchers whose academic standing and contributions to science are beyond dispute: [Professor Chris Exley](#) of the United Kingdom's Keele University, [Professor Christopher A. Shaw](#) of the University of British Columbia (UBC) and [Dr. George Lucier](#), former Director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences' Environmental Toxicology Program. Drs. Exley, Shaw and Lucier are precisely qualified to dispute your reckless, dangerous and scientifically baseless assertions that aluminum adjuvants and mercury preservatives in our vaccines are harmless or even "beneficial."

Dr. Exley, the Group Leader of the Bioinorganic Chemistry Laboratory at Keele University's Birchall Centre, has devoted his lengthy career to understanding the toxicology of aluminum in humans and other biological systems. His groundbreaking article on aluminum in the brain tissue of deceased autistic individuals (published in [March 2018](#) in the *Journal of Trace Elements in Medicine and Biology*) reported "some of the highest values for aluminum in human brain tissue yet recorded," including unaccountably high amounts in young people. Dr. Shaw's laboratory at UBC focuses on neurotoxins and neurological diseases ranging from autism to Alzheimer's disease. [Recent publications](#) by Dr. Shaw and colleagues have raised a number of important questions about the toxicity of aluminum adjuvants in vaccines. Dr. Lucier has [presented evidence](#) to the Institute of Medicine and others that ethylmercury in thimerosal-containing vaccines "should be considered equipotent to methylmercury as a developmental neurotoxin." Taken together, the three researchers' findings highlight significant gaps in our understanding of vaccines' potential relationship to the epidemics of neurodevelopmental disorders and autoimmune and chronic illnesses affecting so many of today's children.



Your book title and press releases [suggest](#) that, in contrast to “celebrities, politicians and activists,” you consider yourself to be eminently qualified to furnish health information in a truthful and unbiased manner. I would like to take this opportunity to inquire as to whether your own substantial financial entanglements with the \$52 billion vaccine industry—conflicts you deliberately conceal from your allies in the mainstream media—should disqualify you from representing yourself as a neutral and trustworthy voice in this contentious debate. You have accepted tens of millions of dollars from vaccine companies for your work as the primary spokesman for the industry. You occupy a chair at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia endowed with a [\\$1.5 million](#) grant from Merck, and you were a co-developer, with Merck, of the RotaTeq rotavirus vaccine.

Indeed, your financial conflicts of interest with the vaccine industry since the early 2000s, during your tenure on a key Centers for Disease Control vaccine panel, were the subject of two federal investigations. While sitting on the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), you voted to add a rotavirus vaccine to the CDC childhood vaccine schedule. You neglected to recuse yourself despite the fact that you had your own rotavirus vaccine patent in development. Six years later, thanks to the inclusion of rotavirus on the CDC schedule, you and your business partners were able to sell your patent for \$186 million. This self-dealing transaction in which you effectively “voted yourself rich” was condemned by a 2003 congressional investigation and a 2008 investigation by the HHS Inspector General. Congressman Dan Burton described the “[paradox](#)” of the CDC “routinely allow[ing] scientists with blatant conflicts of interest to serve on influential advisory committees that make recommendations on new vaccines, as well as policy matters,” even though “these same scientists have financial ties, academic affiliations, and other vested interests in the products and companies for which they are supposed to be providing unbiased oversight.” When ACIP added your vaccine (RotaTeq) to the childhood vaccine schedule in 2006, policy-makers of the time [acknowledged](#) that the vaccine was “one of the most expensive” and potentially lucrative ever added to the schedule. Critics of the decision wondered why we were mandating a ruinously expensive and shoddily tested vaccine for tens of millions of children to combat mild illness that accounts for only a few dozen deaths in the United States annually.

You routinely talk about RotaTeq’s [achievements](#), but you have never publicly commented on the elevated rate of agonizingly painful and sometimes deadly [intussusception](#) observed in recipients of RotaTeq nor on the vaccine’s [contamination](#) with DNA fragments from two porcine circoviruses known to cause serious wasting disease in pigs. Scientists and public health experts suggest that your vaccine may be infecting millions of children each year with these viruses. Since the vaccine was never properly safety tested against inert placebos, we may never know the truth.

In a 2011 [interview](#) on National Public Radio’s “Science Friday,” you denigrated “professional anti-vaccine people” for relying on “ad hominem attacks” rather than using science. Yet when

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you paint those who question your unsound and often wild assertions about vaccine safety as being “[false prophets](#)” and “[slick charlatans](#),” while at the same time refusing to debate me or acknowledge the over 1500 peer-reviewed scientific publications cited in my book, *Thimerosal: Let the Science Speak*, linking mercury and aluminum in vaccines and the exploding epidemic of chronic diseases and neurological disorders in children born after 1989, it is clear that you, in fact, strongly prefer the ad hominem route.

In August, 2008, you attacked a skeptical reporter, CBS’s Sharyl Attkisson in an article published in the *Orange County (OC) Register* (“Dr. Paul Offit Responds”), making “[disparaging statements](#)” about Attkisson. Two and a half years later, the *OC Register* was forced to publish a lengthy [correction](#) indicating that you had made a number of “unsubstantiated and/or false” statements. According to the *OC Register*, you untruthfully claimed that you had provided *CBS News* with the details of your financial relationship with Merck (after the network requested information about your speaking and consulting fees and past and future RotaTeq royalties), even though you had not furnished any of the requested information. In fact, you have repeatedly been cagey about your share of the RotaTeq [royalties](#), stating only that it was “like winning the lottery.” Your net worth is currently reported to be [\\$19 million](#)—not bad for a physician employed by a hospital where the average physician salary (\$144,200) is [9% below the national average](#).

A debate with Drs. Exley and Shaw would provide you with a timely opportunity to answer your critics and defend your contentions about vaccine safety and to explain the etiology of the chronic health disorders now affecting 54% of American children. I look forward to your favorable reply.

Sincerely,



Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Chairman  
Children’s Health Defense