

**Transcription of the text of a Department of Health and Human Services Letter From
“Office of the Secretary, Assistant Secretary for Health, Office of Public Health and Science,
Washington, D.C. 20201,”
Date-stamped: “AUG 25 2006,”
To: Dr. King, Founder FAME Systems and
New Jersey Representative for CoMeD,
Coalition for Mercury-free Drugs**

“Dr. Paul G. King
FAME Systems
33 Hoffman Avenue
Lake Hiawatha, New Jersey 07034

Dear Dr. King:

I have read your open letter to the American people concerning dated 9 April 2006 (sic; **concerning**) regarding the use of thimerosal as a preservative in vaccines. I appreciate the concerns you raised in your letter and commend you for your commitment to the health and safety of America’s children. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is committed to promoting health and quality of life by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability, and therefore takes the issue of vaccine safety very seriously.”

“Vaccination against infectious diseases is one of the most effective medical advances of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Serious infectious diseases that once harmed thousands of children each year are either gone or greatly reduced in number because of vaccines. It is true that vaccines, like any medical product, are not entirely without risk—but because millions of healthy children are vaccinated each year, we have high standards for vaccine safety. Vaccines undergo extensive testing to document their effectiveness and safety before they are licensed for use. This process includes a thorough and independent review by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) scientists as **well as a** review by an FDA public advisory review committee.”

“We agree with you that it is unacceptable when healthy children suffer injuries as a result of any intervention, including immunization. It is also unacceptable when children are harmed or die from diseases that can be prevented. In most cases, our recommended childhood vaccines are also protecting children from diseases for which there are no effective medical treatments. We would never recommend any vaccine be given to children or any Americans if there were sound, scientific evidence it could be harmful.”

“With respect to thimerosal, the U.S. Public Health Service has been working to encourage vaccine manufacturers to reduce or discontinue use of this preservative. This action was not taken because there is evidence that the tiny amounts **of** thimerosal used **in** some vaccines was harmful, but because this is one of the few sources of mercury exposure that could, with time, be reduced. It is important to note that measles, mumps, rubella, varicella, inactivated polio, and pneumococcal conjugate vaccines have never contained thimerosal.”

“This effort to reduce the use of thimerosal in vaccines has been very successful. As you may know, with the exception of some influenza vaccines, none of the vaccines used in the United States to protect preschool children against 12 infectious diseases contain thimerosal as a preservative. The vaccines with trace amount of thimerosal licensed to date contain less than 0.5 micrograms of mercury per dose; that is, a given dose of vaccine contains less than 1 part per million. Furthermore, thimerosal preservative-free influenza vaccine is also available for both children and adults.

“More importantly, there is no evidence to suggest that thimerosal in vaccines causes any health problems in children and adults beyond local hypersensitivity reactions (like redness and swelling at the injection site). No children have received toxic levels of mercury from vaccines, and with the currently available vaccines, the maximum exposure during the first six months of life is less than three micrograms of mercury.”

“The efforts to remove thimerosal from the U.S. vaccine supply also have been accompanied by research investigations to better assess the potential health effects of exposure to thimerosal containing (sic; **thimerosal-containing**) vaccines. For example, as part of a large independent review of the safety of our vaccines we contracted with the National Academy of Science’s Institute of Medicine (IOM) to examine the available evidence about a number of vaccine safety issues.

“The IOM conducted eight reviews of specific vaccine safety concerns between 2001 and 2004, including two that focused on thimerosal: Immunization Safety Review: Thimerosal – Containing Vaccines and Neurodevelopmental Disorders (October 2001) and Immunization Safety Review: Vaccines and Autism (May 2004). More information about the IOM Immunization Safety Review Committee, its reports and recommendations can be found at <http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3793/4705/20155.aspx>. The IOM Immunization Safety Review Committee’s most notable conclusions were 1) neither thimerosal-containing vaccines nor the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine are associated with autism and 2) the hypothesis regarding a link between autism and MMR vaccine and thimerosal-containing vaccines lacks supporting evidence and are only theoretical.

“We’ve made substantial progress in removing thimerosal from vaccines – and have done so without placing infants and children at risk for potentially serious vaccine preventable diseases. As we continue our efforts to further reduce the use of thimerosal in vaccines, we must also ensure, particularly in the case of influenza, that our efforts do not create serious undesirable outcomes, such as vaccine shortages that would place people, including children, at risk. History has shown that disruptions in vaccine supplies can render the population more vulnerable to diseases we know we can prevent.

“We recognize that autism affects many families and children, and that many are seeking to find its causes as well as effective treatments. HHS is committed to identifying the biological and environmental causes of autism and other developmental disabilities. We are working with a wide range of partners, from universities to physicians to parents, to fund research studies that will help us understand autism and other developmental disabilities, and hopefully, lead to effective treatments.

“I appreciate your concerns on this important public health matter and hope that the information provided will help clarify the public health activities.”

“Sincerely,”

(apparently signed by Capt. Raymond Strikas, MD)

“Bruce Gellin, MD, MPH

Director

National Vaccine Program Office”