

Global Call for Mercury-free Vaccines Issued

SILVER SPRING, MD, March 16, 2012 — In a [historic open letter](#) to the World Health Organization and other public health agencies, [the Coalition for Mercury-Free Drugs \(CoMeD\)](#), and the United Methodist Women are seeking to stop the use of mercury in human drugs, especially vaccines. Currently, the mercury-based preservative Thimerosal, which is 49% mercury by weight, remains in vaccines for the United States and much of the world, despite the fact that it is a known neurotoxin. While other [safer and less toxic alternatives](#) are being utilized, industry has been slow to eliminate Thimerosal from many vaccines, including [the flu shot](#) given to those most vulnerable to this toxin, children and pregnant women.

The goal of the United Methodist Women and CoMeD is to protect the global immunization program and to safeguard public confidence in vaccines by seeing that the addition of mercury to human pharmaceutical ceases. Through the ongoing diplomatic work of the [Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee of the United Nations Environment Programme](#), these organizations hope to impact the formulation of a global, legally binding treaty on mercury scheduled to be completed in 2013.

In these negotiations, the World Health Organization and other global distributors of vaccine have defended the continuing use of mercury, especially in vaccines. They maintain that there is no evidence of harm from Thimerosal. Dr. Mark R. Geier, a CoMeD director, cautions, “Recent statements by those holding national and global responsibility for vaccine safety are difficult to reconcile with the known and published toxicity of Thimerosal.” [Eight decades of scientific literature](#) have shown that Thimerosal poses a significant health risk and its [manufacturers acknowledge it can cause mild to severe mental retardation in children](#).

The United Methodist Church passed the first global resolution “[Protecting Children from Mercury-containing Drugs](#),” and the United Methodist Women have actively advocated for a ban of mercury in medicine on moral and ethical grounds. As the Rev. Lisa K. Sykes, the author of the original draft of the United Methodist global resolution, asserts, “The United Methodist Women have historically advocated in the areas of education and health, both in this country and around the world. [Undertaking the issue of mercury in vaccines and other drugs](#) is just one expression of that commitment.”

The United Methodist Women and CoMeD support every effort to make safer vaccines, those without added mercury, equally available to all persons around the globe.