



Sharpening the Critique of Vaccination Mandates: A Review Essay

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Aaron Siri, *Vaccines, Amen: The Religion of Vaccines* (Injecting Freedom LLC, www.aaronsiriofficial.com 2025)

Del Bigtree (writer/narrator/executive producer), *An Inconvenient Study* (80-min. documentary film, www.aninconvenientstudy.com, 2025)

The experience of COVID-19 focused unprecedented attention on the assumptions underlying vaccination policy. The official US response to COVID-19 was to pin all hope on the development of a “vaccine” that would solve the problem. During the nine months from when pandemic was declared (March 2020) to when the supposed magic bullet was hastily rolled out (under Emergency Use Authorization, bypassing adequate safety tests), treatment of persons infected with the virus was routinely delayed until their condition was so severe as to require hospitalization.* The country’s subsequent ordeal of contagion, death, and lockdown sparked a debate over vaccination that transcended the immediate issue of COVID-19 policy, casting a spotlight on the entire faith in limitless immunization that had generated the world’s most prodigious - often coercively imposed - childhood vaccination schedule. The debate has been fueled in the US by a rise in infant mortality, a dramatic increase in chronic disorders among children (allergies, diabetes, obesity), and a notable decline in life expectancy.

Underlying this whole development has been the exceptional power of the US pharmaceutical industry, with its ubiquitous media presence, its controlling influence over regulatory agencies, and its vast phalanx of lobbyists in the halls of Congress.† A core trait of big pharma, in addition to its opposition to free universal healthcare, is its commodity-friendly approach to health maintenance, associated with ignoring or downplaying environmental, economic, and dietary harms while fostering longterm dependence on medications with often problematic side-effects - as opposed to a holistic (labor-intensive) approach requiring thorough acquaintance with the traits and life-conditions of each individual patient. Vaccines are a unique subset of pharmaceutical commodities in that, unlike other drugs, they can be imposed by political mandate (e.g., as a prerequisite for jobs or school). To that extent, they are not subject to the uncertainty of “informed consent”; their imposition is across-the-board, disregarding individual vulnerabilities.

The commercially privileged status of vaccines dates back to 1986, when the US Congress, under pressure from a pharmaceutical industry that had suffered big losses from litigation over vaccine injuries, passed a law (the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act)

*See Victor Wallis, “The Impact of Censorship on Covid-19 Policy Formation in the United States,” European Society of Medicine, Medical Research Archives, 11:4 (2023).

<https://doi.org/10.18103/mra. v11i4.3822> (expanded version in Socialism and Democracy, 38:2/3 [2024], <https://doi.org/10.1080/08854300.2024.2309805>) and sources cited therein.

†See Marcia Angell, M.D., *The Truth About the Drug Companies: How They Deceive Us and What to Do About It*. New York: Random House, 2005.

that exempted vaccines from product-liability - and thereby also from the rigorous level of screening applied to other drugs. The US medical establishment, incentivized by the now risk-free (for vaccines) pharmaceutical industry, then proceeded to endorse as routine the highest quantity of prescribed childhood immunizations of any country in the world (29 shots in the first 12 months of life, per the CDC, as of 2025) (Siri, 37). The incentives for doctors are multifold. Big pharma heavily influences medical education and research journals. It sponsors medical conferences and seminars. It underwrites professional associations, most importantly the American Academy of Pediatrics. It regularly visits doctors' offices bearing free samples of drugs. Above all, it finances and populates key federal regulatory agencies such as the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) that vouch for the safety of its products.

With this entire institutional complex dominated by big pharma, the pressure on doctors to deny any possible negative effects of vaccines has been enormous. Instances of young children becoming disabled or dying in the immediate aftermath of an injection (e.g., in cases dubbed "sudden infant death syndrome") are not acknowledged as such, and efforts by parents to escape the mandate are generally overruled. It is this predicament that compelled Aaron Siri, as a lawyer, to gain mastery over the research literature on vaccines. In a divorce case, Siri was called upon to represent a mother who sought to exempt her child, on medical grounds, from a vaccination mandate that the child's father intended to accept. In the course of the trial, Siri conducted a remarkable nine-hour deposition (under oath) of the acclaimed top authority on vaccines in the United States, Dr. Stanley Plotkin.

Siri recounts the deposition in detail in the first chapter of his book (the climactic moments are also shown on film in *An Inconvenient Study*). Dr. Plotkin, called as an "expert witness," asserted, without any knowledge of the child at issue, that she "should receive every vaccine on the CDC's vaccine schedule" (13). Attorney Siri then began by establishing Dr. Plotkin's longstanding financial and consultative links with the big four vaccine manufacturers. He next turned to the matter of clinical trials. Addressing the hepatitis B vaccine that is injected at birth, he established, as confirmed by the manufacturer's package-insert, that the impact of the first such vaccine was monitored in the clinical trial for *only five days*, with no control group. He got Dr. Plotkin to admit that this was not long enough to detect any resultant neurological disorder. When pressed about a second hep B vaccine whose stated trial period was only *four days*, Plotkin asserted that subsequent reports beyond the four days were solicited; however, he was unable, even in response to a follow-up subpoena, to provide proof for this claim (19-22). A similar exchange took place regarding a possible connection between pertussis vaccines and autism. Actual studies reported on by the Institute of Medicine - and recognized by Plotkin - had neither proved nor disproved such a link. Plotkin nonetheless asserted without adducing any evidence - we see him saying it in the film, exemplifying what Siri aptly calls an affirmation of faith rather than a scientific finding - that there is no such link (29).

Siri goes at length into the matter of clinical trials in the book's tenth chapter, devoted to refuting the claim that "Vaccines Are Thoroughly Studied Pre-Licensure," which is almost exactly the assertion made by prominent vaccinologist (and co-editor of the standard textbook *Plotkin's Vaccines*), Dr. Paul Offit (149). Citing FDA data, much of which is included in the requisite package-inserts, Siri observes that "none of the routine childhood injected vaccines were licensed for children based on a placebo-controlled trial" (143). Siri quotes at length (including with screenshots) from an email exchange he had with Dr. Offit,

in the course of which Offit acknowledges that the “placebos” used as controls are not necessarily inert. In fact, the most frequently used controls are other vaccines, as Offit is shown confirming in an interview in *An Inconvenient Study*.[‡] Dr. Offit defends this practice by arguing that it would be unethical to withhold from the control group an already available vaccine; but the safety credentials of the original vaccine remain unproven.

Both *Vaccines, Amen* and *An Inconvenient Study* include extensive documentation on vaccines (most famously, DTP, diphtheria tetanus pertussis) which, although protecting the patient against a directly targeted illness, correlate with increased likelihood of death from other causes. This was illustrated in a retrospective study in West Africa whose findings are encapsulated in the filmed statement by a Danish professor of Global Health who is shown regretfully concluding that “the DTP vaccine may kill more children than it saves.” Siri finds similar evidence regarding the mRNA shots given in response to COVID-19. Critically analyzing the contention that “Covid-19 Vaccines Saved Us!” (97-102), Siri compares the number of excess deaths in the US before and after the shots were given, finding that there was no decrease in the second year of the shots.[§] He also cites figures that were briefly kept in Scotland in December 2021/January 2022 (a rare moment in which the relevant data were made public), showing that the death rate among those who received the shot was twice as high as among those who did not (133).

Findings like this are not anomalous; they reflect various disruptions of natural immunity. The resultant dangers point to the need for deeper probing into the safety of vaccines, whether singly or (very importantly) in combination. Given the objections to placebo-controlled trials, retrospective studies are called for, based on large subject-populations and following their health outcomes over a long period. This is something that the relevant government agencies, bound as they are to big pharma, have been loath to undertake. Studies conducted by dissident doctors have been dismissed as being unrepresentative. The eponymous “inconvenient study” of Del Bigtree’s film was designed precisely to override such objections. It was based on the already existing long-term records of thousands of patients of the Henry Ford Health System in Detroit. The study, proposed as a challenge by Bigtree,^{**} was carried out in 2017 under the direction of HFHS director Dr. Marcus J. Zervos, who hoped that it would confirm his positive view of the vaccination regimen. To his dismay, however, it showed the opposite. Specifically, it found that “The overall probability of being free of a chronic health condition at 10-years of follow up was 43% in the group exposed to vaccination and 83% in the unexposed group.”^{††}

[‡] The film at this point includes a useful graphic explanation of the pyramid of vaccine “controls” leading back to an initial vaccine that was not tested against any placebo.

[§] For a comprehensive critique of the response to COVID-19, see Byram Bridle and Harvey Risch, M.D., with ten other authors, *Toxic Shot: Facing the Dangers of the COVID “Vaccines”* (2024) (distr. via Amazon).

^{**} Bigtree is the CEO of ICAN (Informed Consent Action Network).

^{††} Lois Lamerato, Abigail Chatfield, Amy Tang, and Marcus Zervos, M.D., “Impact of Childhood Vaccination on Short and Long-Term Chronic Health Outcomes in Children: A Birth Cohort Study” (2017), <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/Entered-into-hearing-record-Impact-of-Childhood-Vaccination-on-Short-and-Long-Term-Chronic-Health-Outcomes-in-Children-A-Birth-Cohort-Study.pdf>, p.8. On data from the other known studies of vaccinated vs. unvaccinated cohorts, see Dec. 2025 interview with epidemiologist Nicholas Hulscher, <https://www.thefocalpoints.com/p/all-12-vaccinated-vs-unvaccinated>

Dr. Zervos then faced the dilemma of whether to honor the commitment he had made to Bigtree to publish the study whatever its outcome. After a long delay, Bigtree persuaded Zervos to meet with him. The film's climax unfolds as we see Zervos, at a lunch-meeting secretly videotaped by Bigtree, first reaffirming the findings of the study but then backtracking on his promise to submit it for publication. He states explicitly that he is doing this turnaround for fear of losing his job.

We are thus drawn back to recognizing the extraordinary role of censorship, as opposed to scientific method, in sustaining the uncritical veneration of vaccines - a veneration that ironically portrays itself as constituting "the science." Contrary to Dr. Plotkin's assertion, which is ritually repeated even in otherwise progressive outlets like *Democracy Now*, a link between vaccines and autism has never been scientifically "debunked"; instead, suggestions of even the *possibility* of a link have been met with ferocious attacks (including the forced retraction of published articles), ever since it was first broached in the 1990s.

It's more than ironic that science-based pushback against the "religion" of vaccines has found its most powerful platform within the rabidly anti-science ("climate change is a hoax") administration of Donald Trump.[#] The baseless assertion of an inherent link between vaccine critique and right-wing politics is indeed - along with the Democrats' unstinting military support of Israel - one of the factors that tipped the 2024 electoral balance in Trump's favor, as vaccine-critic Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., after his presidential Primary challenge to Joe Biden was muzzled rather than debated by the Democrats, flipped his constituency over to Trump.

There is nothing in the actual argument of either Aaron Siri's book or Del Bigtree's film - which includes an interview with Siri^{§§} - that implies a right-wing agenda. Siri's book, in particular, has merits transcending any possible political implications that might be attributed to it. It offers a comprehensive treatment of the phenomenon of vaccine-use, with detailed examination of its trajectory in relation to the full range of infectious diseases (including also MMR [measles/mumps/rubella] and polio). Siri takes aim at exaggerated claims made for the vaccines, pointing out, for example, that dramatic improvements occurred in the case of major diseases before vaccination was introduced (74-92), and that claims of "millions of people saved" by a vaccine, apart from being based on speculative models, often vastly exceed the numbers actually killed by an infection before the vaccine against it became available.

The thoroughness of Siri's survey makes it a valuable reference-work (lacking only an index). It is exhaustively documented and engagingly written. It should be widely read, not only for its immediate insights, but also as indispensable background to current debates over health policy.

[#] An example this pushback is the CDC's recent (Nov. 2025) revision of its statement on autism, which, instead of ruling out vaccines as a factor, simply notes that the question of its causes requires further study. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccine-safety/about/autism.html>. For exposition of the political paradox, see Victor Wallis, "Covid-19 in the History of Capitalism," *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 36:1 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2024.2434559>

^{§§} See also the more extensive Dec. 2025 interview with Siri at <https://live.childrenshealthdefense.org/chd-tv/shows/good-morning-chd/the-religion-of-vaccines/>