Vocal vaccine deniers: exposing the techniques and methods used by anti-vaccination

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Why this project?

Requests from national immunization managers

Risk of alienating hesitant parents

Lost opportunities to support those who support vaccination
Key messages of the tool

- Decide whether to participate or not
- Understand who you are really talking to
- Know the techniques and methods used by vocal vaccine deniers
- Prepare evidence-informed messages on the topics vocal vaccine deniers focus on
Rule no 1: The public is your real audience

Help undecided make an informed choice

Support them in their decision to vaccinate

Vocal vaccine deniers

Supporters of vaccination
What do we know about “the public”?

→ Tend to be guided by emotions rather than science

→ Trust spokespersons who...
  – use clear, understandable and non-technical language
  – demonstrate an ability to listen to people’s concerns, taking these seriously and responding to them

→ Are more likely to believe in messages that support the conclusion they have already come to (confirmation bias)
What do we know about “the public”?

Step 1
Unmask the technique

Conspiracies
Fake experts
Selectivity
Impossible expectations
Misrepresentation and false logic

“I am not against vaccination; only concerned about keeping children safe. And this is why I say: no child should receive this vaccine until we know that it is 100% safe”
“Unmasking”

→ A style which matches your personality, the situation, the cultural context, your opponent

→ Do not escalate conflict

Example of unmasking impossible expectations:

“Expecting 100% safety is impossible; even the simplest medical interventions such as taking a pain killer or drawing a blood sample can never be 100% safe.”
Example: unmasking “selectivity”

“This paper which I hold in my hands now very clearly proves a link between MMR and autism. And there are many more studies alike”

“Ms Young is cherry picking the scientific evidence, ignoring the bulk of solid evidence which disproves her position.”
Step 2
Provide the evidence-based message which is relevant for the topic raised

Threat of diseases
Alternatives
Effectiveness
Trust
Safety

“Diseases are under control. The risk for any individual child of being infected with measles is so extremely low. There is absolutely no need to ask children to run the risk of vaccination.”
The message

→ A style which matches your personality, the situation, the cultural context, your opponent...

→ Know your facts

→ Prepare

Example of key message for topic “Threat of disease”:
“Diseases are only under control if we stay vigilant and continue to vaccinate. There are small children and people with conditions who cannot be vaccinated – we all have a responsibility to protect them by being vaccinated. Vaccine-preventable diseases can be very severe, and still cause millions of deaths per year, including in our neighbouring country.”
The message

→ A style which matches your personality, the situation, the cultural context, your opponent...

→ Know your facts

→ Prepare

Example of key message for topic “Threat of disease”:

“This logic is false and may be damaging. Diseases are only under control if we stay vigilant and continue to vaccinate. There are small children and people with conditions who cannot be vaccinated – we all have a responsibility to protect them by being vaccinated. Vaccine-preventable diseases can be very severe, and still cause millions of deaths per year, including in our neighbouring country."
“Vaccines are unnatural and therefore unhealthy for a natural organism like the human being. Natural prevention is so much better for our children than chemical and artificial solutions.”

“Mr Jones is using false logic when claiming that something is bad because it is not natural. Sometimes unnatural is good – for example hip replacement – sometimes it is bad – for example chemical weapons. I will repeat what is supported by an overwhelming body of scientific evidence: There are no alternatives that are as safe and effective as vaccines.”
In conclusion

By preparing…

- Know the techniques and how to unmask them
- Know the key topics and how to provide the evidence-based response to each of these

…you will feel and appear more

Confident
Trustworthy
Compelling

Appeal to the public audience (Rule no 1)
Other topics covered

- Participating or not?
- Religious concerns
- Predatory publishing – fake experts
- Dos and don’ts in verbal communication
- Non-verbal communication
- Responding to unfavourable interview conditions
- How to behave when the discussion becomes passionate