

Saint Louis University doctors aim to dispel myths about vaccines

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Two Saint Louis University pediatricians are leading a Missouri State Medical Association statewide effort to change the way doctors respond to parents' fears of vaccines, and to raise awareness about the importance of getting children vaccinated.

Ken Haller, M.D., associate professor of [pediatrics](#), and Anthony Scalzo, M.D., professor of toxicology and pediatrics, co-authored the article, "I've Heard Some Things That Scare Me: Responding With [Empathy](#) to Parents' Fears of Vaccinations," which was published in the January/February 2012 issue of *Missouri Medicine*, the Journal of the Missouri State Medical Association and is the centerpiece of the campaign. In the article, Haller and Scalzo, who see patients at SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center, examine the science around vaccinations as well as the many messages that parents get from the media, from well-intentioned but poorly informed anti-vaccine advocates, and even from doctors that can lead parents to be wary of immunizations for their own children.

According to Haller, physicians have not always been the best advocates for [vaccine safety](#). Too often they have dismissed parents' fears and accused them of not caring enough to do the right thing for their child. Until physicians do a better job of recognizing that it is normal and even healthy for parents to have fears about their child, he says, physicians will not be seen as trustworthy, and parents will continue to put their faith in those who oppose vaccines.

"We want to encourage pediatricians to go beyond the science around vaccines - which is unequivocally on our side - and express our own fears about the clear and present danger that these diseases present to babies and young children. Parents and physicians want the same thing - to keep children safe and healthy. But we can only do that if our fears are based in reality," Haller said.

More information: Read "I've Heard Some Things That Scare Me: Responding With Empathy to Parents' Fears of Vaccinations" in its entirety: www.msma.org/docs/communications/MoMed/Vaccination%20Feature%20Jan%20Feb%20MoMed.pdf

Provided by Saint Louis University

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