

Governments urged to adopt compensation for rare vaccine injury

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Research led by The University of Western Australia has found that most countries with mandatory childhood vaccination policies don't have no-fault vaccine injury compensation schemes to care for rare victims of vaccines.

Lead researcher Katie Attwell, from UWA's School of Social Sciences, said no-fault compensation schemes enabled governments to address unintended consequences of vaccination.

"Vaccines are safe, effective and beneficial," Dr. Attwell said. "Comprehensive vaccination programs save countless lives by preventing infectious diseases that can maim and kill."

The research, published in *Vaccine*, argued that when a state introduced mandatory vaccination a 'social contract' was created which should protect individuals from any extremely rare adverse consequences.

"We believe that the state has a responsibility to address rare but unexpected hardships that may occur as a result of individuals complying with vaccination policies," Dr. Attwell said.

"The more strictly mandatory vaccinations are enforced and the more difficult it is for parents to access exemptions, the stronger this social contract becomes. Yet so few of the countries we identified with [mandatory vaccination](#) regimes also had no-fault compensation schemes."

Of the 62 countries that researchers identified as having mandatory childhood vaccination policies, they found only seven of those countries (11 per cent) had also introduced no-fault compensation schemes.

"Despite their costs and problems, no fault compensation schemes provide considerable benefits," Dr. Attwell said.

"Not only do they fulfil the social contract, they also have the potential to contribute to public and health care worker confidence in vaccination programs.

"If individuals are expected to accept the risks inherent with adhering to [vaccine](#) mandates, they should be confident that they will be cared for if they suffer an adverse event.

"No-fault compensation schemes can also mitigate against negative publicity which can occur when families must take the matter to court.

"Such cases sometimes receive sustained coverage in the media. When no-fault schemes are in place, [public discourse](#) can emphasise that resources have been allocated to [compensation](#), and that governments are ensuring they meet their responsibly to support those harmed.

"This reinforces to the public the important message that by vaccinating, we take care of ourselves, our children and our communities, and that our communities would also take care of us if we were to experience an adverse event caused by a [vaccine](#)."

More information: Katie Attwell et al. Mandatory vaccination and no fault vaccine injury compensation schemes: An identification of country-level policies, *Vaccine* (2019). DOI: [10.1016/j.vaccine.2019.03.065](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2019.03.065)

Provided by University of Western Australia

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