

STATEMENT ON THE DENGVAXIA CONTROVERSY

Let us put public welfare above all else

We, physicians and scientists who serve the country in various capacities and sectors, are saddened, dismayed and alarmed over the manner by which the Dengvaxia controversy has degenerated into a fiasco that has started to erode public confidence in the country's vaccination programs and other public healthcare endeavors. The unnecessary fear and panic, largely brought about by the imprudent language and unsubstantiated accusations by persons whose qualifications to render any expert opinion on the matter are questionable at best, have caused many parents to resist having their children avail of life saving vaccines that our government gives. Even deworming efforts are being met with suspicion and resistance, with many parents afraid to give consent; all because of the misinformation that has been allowed to take hold of the collective psyche. If this trend continues then we may find ourselves faced with outbreaks of debilitating and life threatening diseases that we have already been able to control through our vaccination programs. The only way to continue to prevent deadly epidemics of these infectious diseases is to sustain a high rate of immunization/vaccination in our population. This will not be possible if parents refuse to consent to vaccination for their children because of fear.

It is also with very heavy hearts that we have witnessed some hard working, competent, honest and dedicated physicians and career personnel in the Department of Health, systematically maligned and deprived of their right to defend themselves while those who can and should come to their defense have remained silent. Available documentary evidence that might have been offered to prove the innocence of some of the accused have not been made public for reasons that we can only speculate on. The public hearings have become avenues for "expert bashing" rather than a genuine search for truth.

There is no such thing as a perfect vaccine. The history of vaccination from the 18th century to the present is rife with controversy. A study of the history of these controversies teaches us lessons about the tragic consequences and harm to the general public that result when we allow hysteria to rule over logical and scientific judgment. The medical and scientific community must weigh the risks of any vaccine against its benefits; the potential to save lives against the possible adverse effects. Science is also not static. When new findings are known, recommendations change. These decisions are best made and analyzed without the added burden of public misinformation and demonization.

Given the recent findings of Sanofi Pasteur and recommendations of the WHO, we support the DOH decision to suspend its Dengvaxia immunization program until there is a quick and cost effective way to determine whether a person has had dengue in the past or not. In the same light, given the findings that persistent, long term protection is given by the vaccine to those who have already gotten dengue infection, we urge the DOH not to remove the vaccine from the market altogether. Already we are faced with patients who have had dengue infection in the past, who are now at a loss because they cannot get their doses of Dengvaxia because it has been taken out of the market.

We urge our colleagues in the medical profession to consider the greater good in all their statements and actions and to be careful about unfairly slandering colleagues by careless, sweeping and unsubstantiated accusations.

We urge those who have documentary evidence that can truly shed light on the current controversy to please come forth with the truth. And we beg our legislators to be open to hearing both sides. Allowing half-truths to prevail is dangerous. It not only causes persistent confusion but has also caused mass demoralization among the dedicated and hard working personnel and physicians of the DOH. This is both cruel and unjust.

Finally, amid all the controversy, let us please always put public welfare above all else.

Signed:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaccine_controversies

http://www.who.int/immunization/diseases/dengue/q_and_a_dengue_vaccine_dengvaxia_us/e/en/