

**Date:** March 12, 2015 at 12:04:10 PM PDT

**Subject: Re: Childhood Vaccinations**

**From:** Charles Shanks <[charles.shanks@cbc.ca](mailto:charles.shanks@cbc.ca)>

**To:** Ted Kuntz <[tedjkuntz@gmail.com](mailto:tedjkuntz@gmail.com)>

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Dear Mr. Kuntz,

Thank you for your letter regarding our Feb. 8, 2015 program, "Should some vaccinations be mandatory?" I'm sorry to be late in responding. We had a busy time here at Checkup putting on a live broadcast on location from Pembroke, Ontario.

As Senior Producer of Cross Country Checkup, I cannot speak to your concerns about what Rex Murphy said on The National. As a regular viewer of The National, I might point out that what Rex actually said on The National Feb. 5, 2015 was that, "When anyone who listens to, or seeks medical guidance from, Jenny McCarthy or any of her fellow 'neurosurgeons' on The View, they've confessed to having the intellectual power of a dead tree stump..." That is not quite the same as what you suggest, "...that parents as myself who question vaccine safety 'have the intellectual power of a dead tree stump'." I think his point was that Jenny McCarthy and her show is not a reputable source of medical advice.

On Cross Country Checkup, I don't think anyone suggested that vaccines are without risk. Nor was it suggested people who worry about the risk are stupid. The risk factors are well known and documented ...but very low. Our guest Dr. Michael Gardam made that clear. It is a view shared by over 90% of Canadians who choose to vaccinate, that the risk posed by disease is greater than the risk posed by taking the vaccine itself. Of course it is of small comfort to the tiny minority of children who tragically have experienced a damaging adverse reaction to a vaccine. But there is no option without risk, where nobody will be harmed. There is however the added element of social responsibility to the community in the option to vaccinate.

The purpose and topic of our program was not to discuss whether vaccinations are good or bad. It was to discuss whether they should be made mandatory because of the obvious benefits to the greatest number of people. Your point of view was heard on our program, as it should be. In the context of our program, to elevate the small risk of a bad reaction to a vaccine to the point that it would be seen as a 50/50 choice would be journalistically irresponsible.

I think the discussion was handled with respect for all views.

It is also my responsibility to tell you that if you are not satisfied with this response, you may wish to submit the matter for review by the CBC Ombudsman. The Office of the Ombudsman, an independent and impartial body reporting directly to the President, is responsible for evaluating program compliance with the CBC's journalistic policies. The Ombudsman may be reached by mail at Box 500, Terminal A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1E6, or by fax at (416) 205-2825, or by e-mail at [ombudsman@cbc.ca](mailto:ombudsman@cbc.ca)

Sincerely,

Charles Shanks

Senior Producer

Cross Country Checkup

CBC Radio One