

**Ministry  
of  
Health**

Office of the Minister

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**Ministère  
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**MAY 8 2000**

Ms. Edda West, Co-ordinator  
Vaccine Risk Awareness Network (Canada)  
P.O. Box 169  
Winlaw BC V0G 2J0

Dear Ms. West:

**Re: Vaccine Risk Awareness Network (VRAN)**

Thank you for your letter of January 31, 2000 outlining VRAN's concerns. I understand from your letter that the mandate of VRAN is to educate the public about the risks, adverse reactions and contraindications of vaccines.

I regret that I am unable to meet with you personally regarding this issue. However, I would like to reassure you that I have been advised that the epidemiologic and other scientific evidence, as well as the considered opinions of national and international expert bodies, support immunization as an extremely effective intervention for disease prevention, whose benefits far outweigh the risks.

Because of the overwhelming epidemiologic and scientific evidence regarding the benefits of immunization, the ministry promotes immunization as a highly effective preventive health intervention. Parents need to be informed about the risks of the vaccine-preventable diseases and the potential adverse consequences of withholding immunization, as well as the medical contraindications and potential adverse effects for specific vaccines.

The legislated requirements for immunization, options for exemption, and potential consequences of choosing not to comply with the recommended immunization schedule for children, are communicated to parents by staff of the local health unit. This information is provided to the parent/student at the time of school or day nursery registration, during the health unit's review of the immunization status of pupils/day nursery attendees and in response to specific inquiries by parents.

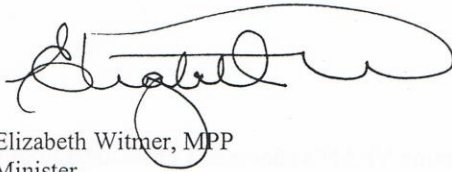
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Ms. Edda West, Co-ordinator

It is the responsibility of the health care practitioner who proposes any treatment, including preventive treatment such as immunization, to ensure that informed consent has been given for this treatment before the treatment is administered. Thus, the obtaining of informed consent for immunization is the responsibility of the physician or other health care practitioner administering the immunization.

Again, thank you for writing to advise me of VRAN's mandate, and for sharing the group's concerns with me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Witmer', written over a horizontal line.

Elizabeth Witmer, MPP  
Minister

The Ministry of Health has changed its name to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. To avoid extra costs, we are using our existing letterhead paper before printing a supply with the new name.

Le ministère de la Santé a changé de nom: ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Afin d'éviter des coûts supplémentaires, nous utilisons le stock de papier en-tête en réserve avant d'imprimer une provision portant le nouveau nom.