

Every Child By Two – Vaccine Court Ruling Briefing
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Operator: Good afternoon. Welcome to the press briefing on the vaccine court ruling conference call. As a reminder, all lines will be on listen-only mode and we will conduct a Q&A session shortly. If you need any technical assistance during the call, please press *0 to speak to an operator. At this time, I'd like to turn the call over to Amy Pisani so that we may begin. Go ahead Amy.

Ms. Amy Pisani: Thank you operator. I do notice when you're speaking that I hear some cutting in and out. Am I coming through clearly?

Operator: Yes ma'am.

Ms. Amy Pisani: Okay. Thank you very much for joining us on this call. I know that you're probably all frantically reading the documents that came across not too long ago. We do have some very good speakers to help us assimilate the information that came out this morning.

My name again is Amy Pisani and I've been the executive director for Every Child By Two for about 12 years now. Very briefly, Every Child By Two is the Carter/Bumpers campaign for early immunizations and Mrs. Carter and Bumpers have been working on vaccines for 30 years and our goal is to ensure that all children are vaccinated on time. We have two very good websites that you can refer to. Our first is www.ecbt.org and the other is vaccinateyourbaby.org, so if you need more information about us you can just visit either of those sites.

Our first speaker, though, is Randolph Moss. Our second speaker will be Dr. Paul Offit. I will go through Randolph's background and then when he is finished I will move over to Paul. Very brief comment; we want to leave a lot of time for you to ask your questions. So Randolph Moss is a partner at WilmerHale. He is co-chair of the firm's government and public policy litigation group and a member of the Appellate and Supreme Court Practice Group and the Defense National Security and Government Contracts Department. Mr. Moss originally joined the firm back in 1989 after serving as a law clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens. He has served in many positions. He has a great deal of understanding regarding the vaccine court and I'm sure he'll be a great resource to you. Randolph, would you like to start?

Mr. Randolph Moss: I'd be happy to and I should start by saying that I think hopefully, like everyone else on the call here, I can't claim to have read the 670 pages of opinions that were released this morning, but I've had a chance to at least quickly glance through them, so I'll do my best to at least convey what I've been able to discern from the opinions on a quick read.

This process is a process that began back in 2002 when the Special Masters from the Vaccine Court, which is an adjunct of the United States Court of Federal Claims, created an omnibus proceeding for handling the claims that alleged that vaccines, and in particular thimerosal-containing vaccines, were associated with autism and back in 2002 the Chief Special Masters initiated a process, which has been referred to as the Omnibus Proceeding, in which what are now well over four thousand and closer to five thousand claims were handled together in a single proceeding and what the Vaccine Court decided to do in order to handle these cases was to break the case down into three parts and to have three sets of test cases and for each of the three theories of causation, to hear three test cases, and issue opinions in those three test cases, both with respect to whether the vaccines caused an injury in those particular cases and

also to address questions of general causation and whether the overall theory of causation was one that had any validity to it or not in a way that could then guide the other cases and the three separate theories of causation that were articulated a number of years back now were first that the autism was caused, at least in some cases, by a combination of thimerosal-containing vaccines and the MMR vaccine. The second theory was that it was simply the thimerosal-containing vaccines by themselves that were the cause of autism and the third theory was that it was the MMR vaccine by itself that was the cause of autism. The Vaccine Court has now heard the testimony, quite extensive testimony, hearing from many, many experts on the first theory and has had briefing and has now issued its decisions on that first set of three cases dealing with the first theory. The Court has also heard evidence on the second theory and it appears that the petitioner group is no longer pursuing the third theory; that the MMR vaccine causes autism was really subsumed within the first theory, which the Court issued three decisions on today.

As I indicated, the decisions are extremely lengthy and detailed and show enormous care in seriousness by the Special Masters that considered each of these cases. One of the decisions is 174 pages long, there's one that's 203 pages long, and another one that's 293 pages long. The way the proceeding worked is that although they were separate cases, each of the three Special Masters actually sat in on the hearings in the other two cases, so they heard the evidence. They came in in all three of these cases and it was quite extensive. In each of the three cases, each of the three separate Special Masters, who considered them independently, concluded that there was no link and there was a failure to establish causation and rather than trying to summarize opinions that I quite candidly have not had a chance to read, I can at least read for you the conclusions as summarized in the opinions themselves, which I think tell a great deal.

The first of the cases is a case called Cedillo and the decision was by Special Master Hastings, who is the Special Master who actually has presided over these proceedings since the beginning and what Special Master Hastings says is "The petitioners in these cases have advanced the causation theory that has several parts including contentions that thimerosal-containing vaccines can cause immune dysfunction, that the MMR vaccine can cause autism, and that the MMR vaccine can cause chronic gastrointestinal dysfunction. However, as to each of those issues, I conclude that the evidence was overwhelmingly contrary to petitioners' contentions. The expert witnesses presented by the respondents were far better qualified, far more experienced, and far more persuasive than petitioners' experts concerning most of the key points. The numerous medical studies concerning these issues performed by medical scientists worldwide have come down strongly against the petitioners' contentions. Considering all the evidence, I found that the petitioners have failed to demonstrate that thimerosal-containing vaccines can contribute to causing immune dysfunction or that the MMR vaccine can contribute to causing either Autism or gastrointestinal dysfunction." And then he subsequently says in the opinion, and this is on page 31, "A thorough examination of the record makes it clear that there is no evidence (and he himself actually emphasizes the word no) beyond Dr. Aposhian's own assertion that ethylmercury in the very small amounts contained in thimerosal-containing vaccines can cause infant immune systems or otherwise contribute to autism in any way".

Then in the second opinion, which was by Special Master Campbell Smith in the Hazelhurst case, the conclusions are quite similar. On page 199 of the opinion, the Special Master concludes, "The parties have submitted a wealth of evidence and have presented the testimony of a number of experts who have extensive clinical and research experience in particular areas of interest in this case. Having carefully and fully considered the evidence, the undersigned concludes that the combination of thimerosal-containing vaccines and the MMR vaccine are not causal factors in the development of autism and therefore could not have contributed to the development of Yates' autism."

And then finally in the third opinion, which is in the Snyder case, and this is the one, I believe, which is 293 pages of analysis going carefully through all the expert opinions, and this was by Special Master Vowell, the Special Master concludes, "After considering the record as a whole, I hold the petitioners

have failed to establish by preponderant evidence that Colton's condition was caused or significantly aggravated by a vaccine or any component thereof. The evidence presented was both voluminous and extraordinarily complex. After careful consideration of all the evidence, it is abundantly clear that petitioners' theories of causation were speculative and unpersuasive. Respondent's experts were far more qualified, better supported by the weight of scientific research and authority, and simply more persuasive on nearly every point in contention." And then the Special Master goes on and says, "Petitioners failed to establish that measles virus can cause autism or that it did so in Colton. They failed to demonstrate that the amount of ethyl mercury in TCVs (thimerosal-containing vaccines) causes immune systems depression or dysregulation. They failed to show that Colton's immune system was dysregulated".

So that is sort of a brief summary of what has happened in these cases. We'll be obviously be studying the opinions in greater depth and I'd be happy either now, or perhaps at the end, whatever the moderator thinks is more appropriate, to take any questions you have.

Ms. Amy Pisani: Thank you so much. I think we'll wait until Dr. Offit has a chance to speak and then we'll take plenty of calls at that time. So Dr. Paul Offit is the chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases and the director of the Vaccine Education Center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. He is the co-inventor of the rotavirus vaccine, which combats the most common cause of severe diarrhea among children. Dr. Offit is the author of five books, including his latest book which is called *Autism's False Prophets*. He has also written more than 130 papers which have been published in medical and scientific journals. I'm certain that many of you have read about him in recent press releases and press reports and he's got a great deal of information on vaccines that would be helpful in writing any further publications, so Dr. Offit?

Dr. Paul Offit: What I'll do is very briefly review the science behind the contention that vaccines cause autism and then we'll throw it open to your questions and I think probably most of you on the call, or all of you on the call, know this story, but I'll go through it briefly just to make sure we all are on the same page.

In 1998, Andrew Wakefield proposed, in a paper that was published in *Lancet*, that the combination measles, mumps, rubella, or MMR vaccine might cause autism and in support of his theory he reported the story of eight children who had recently received the MMR vaccine and then had developed signs or symptoms consistent with autism. Now at the heart of his theory was the following notion: That the MMR vaccine would be injected into children's arms, that the measles-containing portion of that vaccine would travel to the intestine, cause the intestine to be damaged, and then allow for the entry of encephalopathic, meaning brain-damaging proteins, that would then travel to the brain and cause autism. Now every aspect of that theory has essentially been refuted. No one has been able to find any evidence for the fact that measles vaccine, when injected into the arm, either chronically reproduces itself in the intestine or causes intestinal damage. No one has been able to show these so-called brain damaging proteins in the blood of children with autism. In fact, all the evidence shows that the problems, and obviously this is a multi-factorial problems, has to do with proteins that the body makes itself and either dysregulates or makes poorly and then, I think probably more importantly, there have been a series of what are now 12 epidemiological studies looking at hundreds of thousands of children who either did or didn't receive MMR vaccine to find that there was no greater risk of autism in the group that received the MMR vaccine as compared to the group that didn't and these are very sensitive studies. I mean these are the kinds of studies that could pick up a problem if even 1% of the children who have autism or that were affected by the MMR vaccine.

Then actually a year later, in 1999, the American Academy of Pediatrics took the lead on the notion that thimerosal, at the level contained in vaccines, might be harmful and so what they did, I think largely following the precautionary principle, was to ask pharmaceutical companies to take this thimerosal, this

ethyl mercury-containing preservative, out of vaccines as quickly as possible and I think what that did, it was done, I think, in such a precipitous and frightening manner that it gave birth to certain parent advocacy groups like SafeMinds, who were concerned, I think reasonably, that thimerosal might be harmful. They asked the question if you're taking it out in such a precipitous manner, might there not be something that was a problem with thimerosal and autism was what they were concerned about and so again, I think to the credit of the public health community and academic community, there was an immediate response and now we have about six studies that have been done looking at whether or not thimerosal, at the level contained in vaccines, causes autism and again, looking at hundreds of thousands of children on several different continents by several different investigators and different populations of children, one finds that those children who received thimerosal in vaccines as compared to those who received lesser quantities of thimerosal in vaccine or no thimerosal in vaccines all had the same risk of autism, which is to say thimerosal, at the level contained in vaccines, didn't cause autism and even, I think probably more importantly, there have been now four studies, looking at the fourth one, this Italian study that just recently was published, four studies that have looked, I think, at the more reasonable question which was thimerosal, at the level contained in vaccines, did it cause even subtle forms of mercury toxicity and again, the answer was no, which given, frankly, the amount of mercury that one is exposed to in the environment as compared to what's in vaccines would have made sense, so I think that the science clearly has exonerated both MMR and thimerosal as causes of autism and so now we have this science being presented to the court and as a scientist I can tell you I think it is a great day for science and frankly a great day for America's children when the court rules in favor of science, because frankly that's not always the case. I mean not only in other courts, but even in this court, the court hasn't always come down on the side of the science, but frankly even if they had ruled in favor of the petitioners, that wouldn't have changed the science. I think it would have just contributed to the public's misperception of that science, so that's why I have to say thank you.

Ms. Amy Pisani: Thank you Dr. Offit. I appreciate that. We will now, operator, take questions from the reporters on the line.

Operator: Absolutely. At this time, I'd like to open up the call for Q&A. Please press 01 on your keypad if you would like to ask a question. Okay, we do have several questions. The first question comes from Pete Williams from NBC News. Go ahead Pete.

Mr. Pete Williams: Thank you and if I could ask you, Mr. Moss, while the ruling today is technically on the combination issue, the thimerosal and MMR together, it does appear that the Special Masters addressed the question of thimerosal by itself. I'm looking at Special Master Hastings' decision where he talks about thimerosal by itself in addition to the combination thing, so what's the right way to look at this? That his holding is that the combination is not a cause of autism and that's indicative that thimerosal itself isn't a cause? In other words, how do we look at these decisions today on the other question about thimerosal by itself?

Mr. Randolph Moss: Yeah, it's a little hard for me to answer that question without having had the opportunity to carefully review the decisions. I can say that at least in Special Master Hastings' opinion, he fairly clearly concludes, and I think it's probably true of the others, as well, that thimerosal does not suppress the immune system, because that was an actual element of this theory, which is that the thimerosal suppressed the immune system which then allowed the measles component of the MMR vaccine to cause damage, so he, at a minimum, addresses that and quite frankly, I haven't had the chance to study the opinion carefully enough to really express a view as to whether the opinions go beyond that and really cast doubt on what will be the second theory, as well.

Mr. Pete Williams: All right, so all we can for sure say at this point is that he says...I guess they had a sort of causal chain, that the thimerosal weakens the immune system and that lets the MMR do its thing,

so we can say that he very definitely says there's no indication that the thimerosal weakens the immune system, but he may or may not say whether thimerosal by itself, through some other mechanism, causes autism. Is that your reading?

Mr. Randolph Moss: Well I think my reading is really just that I haven't read enough yet to know. There is this one sentence where he says a thorough examination of the record makes it clear that there is no evidence beyond Dr. Aposhian's own assertion and then he highlights it, ethyl mercury in the very small amounts contained in thimerosal-containing vaccines, and that's the end of the emphasis, can damage infant immune systems, and then he says or otherwise contribute to autism in any way.

Mr. Pete Williams: What page is that?

Mr. Randolph Moss: What I would suggest doing is probably reading that section of the opinion more carefully to conclude how broadly he intends that sentence to address other issues.

Mr. Pete Williams: What page is that?

Mr. Randolph Moss: That's page 31 in the Cedillo decision.

Mr. Pete Williams: Thank you.

Operator: Okay our next question comes from Maggie Fox from Reuters. Go ahead Maggie.

Ms. Maggie Fox: Hi, it's Maggie Fox at Reuters and I just want to ask does this put to rest those five thousand cases that it was representing? It's kind of a legal question, but where does this put the cases that were behind the whole omnibus proceeding?

Mr. Randolph Moss: Well this still remains in the omnibus proceeding. I believe its final briefing and then decisions in the three test cases on the second theory, that thimerosal alone, can cause autism, and that still remains to be decided in those cases.

Ms. Maggie Fox: Do we have any idea when they're going to rule on that?

Mr. Randolph Moss: You know, I personally do not. There may be some indication...there's a web site that the Vaccine Court maintains and it may be that in one of the updates which they periodically publish there's an indication of when the decision is anticipated. I can tell you that the hearings in those cases, the evidentiary hearings, were from May to July of this past summer.

Ms. Maggie Fox: Yeah, okay, thank you.

Operator: Okay our next question comes from Lauran Neergaard from the Associated Press. Go ahead Lauran.

Ms. Lauran Neergaard: Hi, thank you. I also want to follow up on the sort of what happens next idea. When they argued that thimerosal alone could also be a cause, what was the theory there if it was not immune suppression? I guess I'm grasping at what they still have left to rule on if they were so explicit this time about the thimerosal....

Mr. Randolph Moss: not the problems in the immune system. Dr. Offit, do you feel as though that's something you can address? I'm not sure that I have a great grasp of really what their theory would be as to how the thimerosal alone...

Dr. Paul Offit: Sure. There were many theories, aside from the mere suppression of the immune system, that have been raised, so the notion is that thimerosal could itself travel to the brain, affect the metabolism of these neuronal cells, brain cells, and could cause autism and make one...there have been a number of theories raised that sort of fall under the category of either direct toxicity to the cell or that it alters the metabolism of the cell, so it's not just immune suppression that's been raised as how thimerosal could cause autism, so I do think the answer to your question is that in this now separate topic of whether thimerosal alone can cause autism there will be other theories that will be considered.

Ms. Lauran Neergaard: Okay, so before you can say that this chapter is closed, we do have to actually see this next set of rulings?

Dr. Paul Offit: Well here's what I would say to that. I think we can say that the chapter is closed. I mean the question's a scientific one. I think the question has been answered in a scientific venue. I mean if you look at children who received thimerosal-containing vaccines or vaccines that contained lesser quantities of thimerosal or no thimerosal, there is no increased risk for autism, so scientifically this question's been answered. Whether the courts ultimately support that science doesn't change the science, but you're right. I think in terms of the public's perception, I think we do want our notions to have their day in court and that's what this is. I think, just as a scientist, it's hard to watch when the courts get science wrong. It's reassuring that they got it right here, but either way it would have never changed the science, just the public's perception of that science.

Mr. Randolph Moss: And I think it's hard for us to express a view right now on the legal question of whether these three opinions have implicitly, explicitly, completely, partially, or not at all addressed that latter question about having spent more time working through it. I mean just quickly flipping through the opinions there is analysis of the differences between ethyl and methyl mercury and therefore whether it's appropriate to rely on studies that deal with a methyl mercury in fish and the consumption of the methyl mercury in fish and how that could affect the brain when one's dealing with the very small quantities of ethyl mercury that were in the thimerosal, so there may well be more in the opinions. For present purposes, I just don't feel comfortable, without having read them with some care, expressing a view as to how far they've gone in addressing those issues.

Ms. Lauran Neergaard: Okay and can they go to civil court after losing here and if so, what is the likelihood of prevailing in civil court if you lose in this court?

Mr. Randolph Moss: Well at least some of the cases would have the opportunity to opt out of the program. The way it works is that at the end of the process, if you've actually timely filed a claim with the program and pursued your rights to the program, at the end of that process you have the right to accept or reject the decision of the Vaccine Court and if you reject the decision, having followed the procedures and timely filed a claim, then you are allowed to opt out and to file a case in court, if that's what you're inclined to do, but I think that as to that issue, the same scientific evidence is going to exist and I think that part of the congressional intent in adopting this program was providing people with an opportunity to have their cases heard by impartial, neutral judges, judges who have experience hearing cases of this type, have the evidence thoroughly presented and considered, and that if at the end of the day that evidence was considered and this unbiased, neutral court were to conclude there was nothing to your case, the people then would not [inaudible]. That, though, is not a question of lawfully precluding them from bringing the action, but rather just that having had an opportunity to have their case heard and decided that they might decline to pursue further actions having seen the results.

Ms. Lauran Neergaard: I guess my question was more along the lines of the way this court is set up. It's set up to really give a benefit of the doubt to plaintiffs in a way that a civil court might not and therefore...I don't know if anybody else has ever lost and gone on to civil court and won.

Mr. Randolph Moss: Yeah, you're certainly right about the proposition that it's set up in a way to make it easier to prevail before this court than it would be in the typical court and most notably, this is a no-fault proceeding. You don't have to prove fault to prevail in this, you only need to prove that the vaccine caused the injury.

Dr. Paul Offit: You know Lauran and Randy, you can correct me on this. It seems to me that certainly the birth of court and with legislation in 1986 was exactly what you say. I mean to sort of try and be generous with regard to compensation, the thinking being that we mandate vaccines, vaccines do have side effects, and you want to make sure that things don't spill over into civil court and so that pharmaceutical companies can continue make vaccines and so I think that my sense certainly, looking at a number of recent rulings, is that if anything, they want to err on the side of overcompensating so that you won't have sort of a big spillover into civil courts. I think they see that in many ways as their mission in the same way that they see trying to come behind the science as their mission, but sometimes those two things can be contradictory where one wants to, on the one hand, support the science, but on the other hand you don't want the populous to be dissatisfied to the extent that there's massive civil litigation that could put us back where we were in the early '80s where companies basically were banning vaccines.

Ms. Lauran Neergaard: Okay thank you.

Operator: Okay, there are no further questions at this time.

Dr. Paul Offit: Can I just add one more thing or are we finished?

Ms. Amy Pisani: No we're not finished Paul. I was just going to say we have a couple of more minutes for another question.

Dr. Paul Offit: Okay I just want to say one thing. I think that we've really reached a tipping point in some ways. I mean although in the last 10 years there have been a number of whooping cough outbreaks in areas where parents have chosen not to vaccinate their children, like Fashion Island or Ashland, Oregon, and then last year we had a measles epidemic that was certainly bigger than anything we've seen in more than a decade, I think in January when the CDC announced that cluster of haemophilus influenza type B meningitis cases in Minnesota, where three parents had chosen not to vaccinate their children at all and one of those children got meningitis and died and the other two also had invasive HIB disease, I just think we're now at the point where parents are so scared, or some parents, are so scared of vaccines that they're choosing not to vaccinate their children and putting them at risk and in this case it was a fatal outcome and I think a lot of that has to do with autism and the public's perception, at least some in the public, that vaccines might cause it. I would hope that this decision will help to further reassure parents that vaccines are safe and are important and that a choice not to get a vaccine is not a risk-free choice. What must it have been like for those parents of that seven month old in Minnesota, who choose not to give their child a HIB vaccine, a perfectly safe and effective vaccine, and then watch their child be overwhelmed by HIB meningitis? I just think...one asks the question where is the outrage. It's awful that we've gotten to this point and I think the autism story has contributed to it and I'm obviously very much reassured that the courts were willing to support the science here and hopefully the public can come to understand the science better by that decision.

Ms. Amy Pisani: I hear what you're saying...this is Amy. I think...I'm sitting here wondering is this the end now? The courts have made their decision. Will it be the final tipping point for parents to realize

that they're making decisions for their children not based on science currently, those parents who aren't vaccinating on time or even trying to delay? How many studies? We have 16 studies already that clearly state that vaccines do not cause autism. Now we have the court decision. I hope, I hope that this is it, that this is the final piece of information that we need to reassure parents, but I'm a little doubtful that's the case, but today I'm going to be happy in believing that parents will now, once again, trust in vaccines.

Operator: Okay we do actually have a couple more questions. Is it okay to take a few more?

Ms. Amy Pisani: Great, sure.

Operator: Our first question comes from Pete Williams from NBC News. Go ahead Pete.

Mr. Pete Williams: Two technical questions. For you Randy first of all, so I understand there is no right of appeal from these rulings. What the parents would have to do is abandon their claims before the vaccine court and just file in Federal court, is that right?

Mr. Randolph Moss: No, that's actually not right. They do have a right to appeal and it's actually a two-step process. They can take an appeal from these decisions to the Court of Federal Claims and then an appeal from that decision to the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, so they can, within that process, appeal the decision.

Mr. Pete Williams: How often are the...I realize these cases are sort of in a class by themselves, but how often...do you have any idea what the practice there is? How often do people appeal adverse rulings from this Vaccine Court?

Mr. Randolph Moss: You know, I don't know the exact figure. I think there are a number of opinions, appellate opinions that address issues relating to the Vaccine Court and the Federal Circuit has issued quite a few of them, but they tend to be on questions of law and not on questions of fact in the science, so most often when you see an appeal it's going to be as to whether the court applied the correct standard and in a case like this where the court in each of the cases has just concluded that the evidence is overwhelming in one direction, I think it's certainly less likely that you would see one of the appellate courts intervening in a way that would change the results.

Mr. Pete Williams: Okay and Dr. Offit, when was thimerosal taken out of childhood vaccines and is it still used in adult vaccines?

Dr. Paul Offit: So thimerosal was removed in the spring of 2001 from all vaccines that would have been given to children less than six months of age, but there are still some multi-dose preparations of influenza vaccine that can be given to older children that contain thimerosal as a preservative.

Mr. Pete Williams: Okay, the spring of 2001 for vaccines given to children six months or younger?

Dr. Paul Offit: Right.

Mr. Pete Williams: Right, okay, thank you.

Operator: Okay our next question comes from Maggie Fox from Reuters. Go ahead Maggie.

Ms. Maggie Fox: You guys went ahead and answered my question. It was also whether you thought this was the final nail in the coffin and you're afraid it's not.

Dr. Paul Offit: Well I think that's ultimately, in some ways, up to you. I mean I do think that the public's perception of science is largely viewed through the window as presented by the media and I think how you present it ultimately is how it's taken, how it's perceived by the public. I feel like scientists have done their job here. Tens of millions of dollars have been spent trying to answer these questions quickly and correctly and I think the science has matured here, but still there are many in the public who don't either understand or appreciate that science or refuse to believe the science and that's the bigger question. Why is that? Is it because of the way that scientists are presenting it? Is it because of the way the media is presenting it? I mean why is it that this still lingers? Or is just simply because while it's very easy to scare people, it's very hard to unscare them and that once you're scared, you're permanently scared? I don't know. I guess that's more of a social scientist question than one I can answer, but it is enormously frustrating to watch the science mature and yet still some in the public make choices. As those parents did in Minnesota, that did not only harm but did ultimately killed a child. I mean it's that bad and I feel like we're all responsible at some level, all of us. I mean the scientists that do the studies or talk about the studies, the media that reports the studies. Obviously we're not being clear enough or persuasive enough that we haven't been able to reassure these parents. It's very hard to watch.

Mr. Randolph Moss: This is Randy. I would just add to that, I mean the question of whether it's over and whether this is the last nail. I think this has been a process in which there have been a number of very important steps along the way. A very important step, of course, was when the Institute of Medicine released its analysis after having reviewed the studies that existed at that time and concluded that there was no link between thimerosal and autism. To my mind this is another very important step in the process where you now have not just a body like the Institute of Medicine looking at it, but you now have a court looking at it and at least in the context of these three proceedings, rejecting the causal theories there and I think that with respect to how far it goes or these three decisions go in foreclosing everything going forward, I think we just all have to find time to read the 670 pages.

Ms. Maggie Fox: Okay, thank you.

Operator: Okay, at this time there are no further questions.

Ms. Amy Pisani: Okay we'll hold on for just one more moment to see if anyone has a question.

Operator: Okay. If you would like to ask a question, please press 01 on your keypad.

Ms. Amy Pisani: There are no other questions?

Operator: No, there are no further questions at this time.

Ms. Amy Pisani: Okay, Dr. Offit or Mr. Moss, do you have a final statement that you'd like to make? Any further comments?

Dr. Paul Offit: Just that I think this is a really great day for science and for American children. I'm enormously reassured that the courts can look at scientific data like all the data they had in front of them and reach the conclusion that was inevitable, that anybody that would look at these data would conclude, which is that neither MMR nor thimerosal caused autism.

Ms. Amy Pisani: I concur with that. And Mr. Moss?

Mr. Randolph Moss: I guess the final thing I would add is that I think that just the extent of these opinions and their thoroughness is evidence of how seriously the court has taken these cases and the court, in concluding in virtually each of the cases, said we have enormous sympathy and concern for the

families that are involved here and we really appreciate very much the pain that they've gone through as a result of the illness involved, but that our job is, as Dr. Offit says, is to assess the science and in assessing the science here it was not the vaccines that caused these conditions and I think the court, in part...I think one of the reasons the court was so thorough in its analysis is that it does recognize that this is something that's being closely watched and that the thoroughness of its analysis is important to providing the public with the assurance that it has done its job thoroughly and completely in assessing all of these claims.

Ms. Amy Pisani: All right, great. No, there's no doubt that this is a very emotional issue for many families and Every Child By Two, and I know many of you have heard from the families that do not believe in these theories, and we've actually received many, many, many emails letting us know that they don't, and so I know there's two sides to every issue and this is a very emotional side. Today science did prevail and I think that we can all sort of breathe a sigh of relief that science did prevail. I just wanted to reiterate one more time our websites in case our reporters have further questions. We have a pretty extensive vaccine safety page on the Every Child By Two website. Again, that's www.ecbt.org, like Every Child By Two, and then our other website, which was actually created in order to help respond to parents' questions specifically about vaccines and autism. That's our vaccinateyourbaby.org website and they both have some pretty extensive information in there and we will include more about the omnibus on there, as well. We have an actual page on the original site, the Every Child By Two site on the omnibus proceedings in case anyone is looking for background information. So I want to thank everyone very much for joining and we will speak to you in the near future.

Operator: Thank you. This call has been concluded.

END OF AUDIO.