

The Anthroposophic Hypothesis on Measles during Childhood

E.T. Kok, M. Winkler, E.W. Baars

Background

Despite vaccination coverage of over 95%, a measles outbreak started in May 2013 in the Netherlands. Most cases were orthodox Protestants (n=1,087/1,186; 91.7%) and unvaccinated (n=1,174/1,217; 96.5%). In general, anthroposophy is seen as a risk factor for noncompliance with measles immunization. Anthroposophic health care practitioners and parents dispute the measles vaccination because they believe children might gain physical and mental robustness from natural measles infection, when supported by appropriate nursing care. They have the opinion that childhood infections might be a positive and a necessary step toward a child's good health, conveying protection against a range of diseases. However, scientific evidence for this hypothesis is lacking.

Aims

Therefore the aim of this explorative study is to determine:

1. the effect of the measles on the overall development and well-being among children;
2. the nature of the disease- and treatment process.

Methods and Materials

All parents of Dutch children attending Waldorf Primary schools and/or consulting an anthroposophic general practitioner, that had measles during the outbreak of 2013-2014, have been asked to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire includes questions on demographic variables, vaccination history, the disease- and treatment process, changes in well-being, and the feeling of control of the parents.

Results

- N=102 completed questionnaires aged <=14
- N=3 (anthroposophic), N=69 (Orthodox Protestant)
- 26% received no vaccinations at all
- N=30 (antipyretics), N=7 (antibiotics), N=5 (anthroposophic remedies) during the measles episode

Co morbidity and vaccination history

Characteristics	Yes %
No vaccinations	26
Asthmatic or allergic	18
Neurologic symptoms	1
Congenital abnormalities	6
Chicken Pox	84
Parotitis	26

Measles episode

Measles	Yes %
ill before rash	75
ill >= 5 days before rash	67
Fever	75
Highest temp >= 40°C	25
Mean days with fever >= 38°C	3.3
Stays in bed for a longer period	64
Mean days in bed	4.0

Measles and child development

Child changed?	Yes %
Yes	20
No	75
Unknown	5

What change?	Yes %
Physical	15
Emotional	40
Eczema disappeared	5
Tiredness	30
Bad behavior	10

Changes in child's development and parental control

Time	Yes %
After 1 day	5
After 1 week	60
After 1 month	35

Parents experiences	Yes %
Impetuous period	41
Disease 'under control'	80
Sufficient support of GP	49
Sufficient AM/ self-care	44

Conclusions

1. 20% of the parents did see a change:
 - 40% emotional development/ confidence
 - 60% after 1 week
2. 80% of the parents felt "in control":
 - 40% reported that it was a impetuous period



Dr. Esther T. Kok
 Professorship Anthroposophic Healthcare
 University of Applied Sciences Leiden
 The Netherlands
 Kok.e@hsleiden.nl
 +31 6 46846804

