

# Culture of Life Family Healthcare

## Ethically Questionable Vaccines

By George Delgado, M.D. 3-25-2009

There are five vaccines currently available in the United States that are produced using human cell cultures: one brand of injected polio, rubella, hepatitis A, chickenpox and shingles. The three human cell culture lines are called WI-38, MRC-5 and RA 27/3.

The cell cultures on which they are grown are obtained from “immortal” cell lines, that is, cell lines that are self-propagating. The cells used to start these vaccines, many years ago, were obtained from the bodies of aborted human fetuses. Therefore, use of these vaccines raises ethical and moral questions.

By using these vaccines, we are cooperating with the evil of abortion and risking scandal. “Cooperating with evil,” from an ethical standpoint, means that we are benefiting from or promoting an unjust act, an abortion. “Scandal” means that we may lead others to unethical behavior by the example we set when we use these vaccines.

On the other hand, we do have a duty and a right to protect ourselves and our children from the dangers of infectious diseases. Can we, therefore, in good conscience, use these vaccines?

The Vatican, in 2008, published a document titled *Dignitas Personae* which spells out the Church’s teachings on various bioethical issues including embryonic stem cell research and the use of vaccines developed using “biologic material” of unethical origin, i.e., vaccines made on cell lines initiated with cells from aborted fetuses.

In section 34, the statement affirms that: *Therefore, it needs to be stated that there is a duty to refuse to use such “biological material.”* It continues, however: *Thus, for example, danger to the health of children could permit parents to use a vaccine which was developed using cell lines of illicit origin, while keeping in mind that everyone has the duty to make known their disagreement and to ask that their healthcare system make other types of vaccines available.*

Therefore, it is ethically acceptable to use such vaccines if:

1. There is no alternative vaccine,
2. There is a threat to health that is diminished by the vaccines **and**

3. Those using the vaccines make their reservations known to the vaccine manufactures and request that they develop replacement vaccines using cell lines or media that are not morally tainted.

## **The Tainted Vaccines**

### **Polivax Brand**

This vaccine protects against polio, a severe disease that has nearly been eradicated in the developed world. It is grown using the MRC-5 human cell line. The alternative vaccine, IPOL brand inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) is the preferred polio vaccine as it is grown on an ethically acceptable monkey kidney cell culture. The oral polio vaccine is no longer available in the United States.

### **Pentacel**

Pentacel contains DTaP, HiB and Poliovax vaccines all in one shot. Because of the Poliovax component, it is not ethically acceptable. The acceptable substitute would be Pediarix which contains DTaP, IPOL polio vaccine and hepatitis B given along with HiB. At Culture of Life Family Health Care, we do not use Pentacel.

### **Rubella**

The rubella vaccine is grown on the WI-38 human cell line and the tainted RA 27/3 human cell line was initially used to establish the viral line. Rubella, or German measles, is mainly of concern to pregnant women. A non-immune pregnant mother who becomes infected could transmit the virus to her unborn baby who could develop severe birth defects from the infection. Rubella vaccine is generally given as part of the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine, however it is available as an individual shot, also. There is no alternative to it. However, there are individual measles and mumps vaccines for those who wish to vaccinate against those diseases and forgo rubella immunization.

### **Hepatitis A**

The hepatitis A vaccine is grown on the MRC-5 human cell line. Hepatitis A can be a severe infection of the liver leading to a prolonged illness. It is rarely fatal and it does not lead to a chronic infection like Hepatitis B or C. The infection is usually milder in children and a main reason children are immunized is to protect their parents (children often pass the virus to their parents). There is no vaccine substitute for hepatitis A vaccine; however, immune globulin, which is ethically acceptable, but made from blood products, can be given in anticipation of or within two weeks of an exposure.

### **Chicken Pox**

The chicken pox vaccine is grown using both the MRC-5 and WI-38 human cell lines. Chicken pox is rarely fatal or life-threatening in children. However, older children and adults can become very ill with it.

### **ProQuad**

The ProQuad vaccine is a combination of MMR and chicken pox. It is ethically tainted because of the chicken pox and rubella components.

### **Shingles**

Zoster or shingles is a reactivation of the dormant chicken pox virus that leads to a painful rash on one side of the body generally in the distribution of a single nerve. While not life threatening, it can cause significant, long-lasting pain. The shingles vaccine is grown on the MRC-5 human cell line and therefore is ethically tainted. Because shingles is not life threatening, can be treated with pain medicine and the vaccine is not highly effective (see <http://www.fda.gov/Cber/products/zosmer052506qa.htm>), we do not provide or prescribe for the vaccine.

Except for the Pentacil, Poliovax brand and shingles vaccines, we offer the other vaccines listed above. We ask that you carefully consider whether or not you or your child should receive them. If you choose to receive one or more of these vaccines, we ask that you write a letter of objection to the vaccine manufacturer asking the company to develop an ethically clean alternative. The addresses are provided below. You can request sample letters for each objectionable vaccine from our receptionists.

### **Web sites for vaccine package inserts:**

<http://vaers.hhs.gov/pdf/PackageInserts.pdf>

<http://www.fda.gov/Cber/vaccine/licvacc.htm>

### **Vaccine Company Addresses**

**Poliovax brand:** Sanofi Pasteur, Ltd (not available per FDA website February 2009)

### **Pentacil, Rabies Imovax brand:**

Sanofi Pasteur Limited  
Discovery Drive  
Swiftwater, PA 18370  
Telephone: 570-839-5587  
Fax: 570-839-4096

**Rubella, Hepatitis A: VAQTA brand, Chicken Pox, Shingles, ProQuad:**

Merck & Co, Inc  
One Merck Drive  
P.O. Box 100  
Whitehouse Station, NJ 08889-0100 USA  
Phone: 908-423-1000  
Monday-Friday 8:30 AM - 5:30 PM ET

**Hepatitis A: Havrix brand**

GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals  
Rue de l'Institut 89  
1331 Rixensart, Belgium

[rix.uginfobio@gskbio.com](mailto:rix.uginfobio@gskbio.com)

Phone: +32-2-656-98-31

Fax: +32-2-656-80-00

**US corporate switchboard:**

888 825 5249

**US Communications Corporate inquiries**

Nancy Pekarek

919 483 2839

Mary Anne Rhyne

919 483 2839

Sarah Alspach

215 751 7709