



## Mooselet's Aussie Life

Thoughts from the mind of a Yank Down Under

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2011

### BANNER HEADLINE FROM ABOVE

I am missing something from my body. Something a lot of my slightly older peers have, something my husband I don't have it, neither does my brother nor do any of my children. Chances are your children don't have it either. Wanna guess what it is? This:



Recognise it? It's a smallpox vaccine scar. I was one of the first cohort of children in Boston not to get this vaccination. It's not because my parents were against vaccination, but rather because due to the overwhelming success of the smallpox eradication program it was not necessary. I did not need to be vaccinated against smallpox. Smallpox no longer exists in the wild - it is contained only in a few laboratories - due to vaccination. For a moment and consider the impact of that statement. We humans, not always known for our overwhelming altruism, stopped a disease not just in a handful of countries but the entire world. That's pretty frickin' awesome

We were nearly there with polio. And until very recently measles was declared eradicated in the United States. a shift has started, and not in a good way. Measles has made a comeback in the US, Canada and Europe in recent years. Polio is only a plane flight away. How is this possible? How can we have wiped out smallpox but not have continued with polio, measles and other diseases for which exists a vaccine?

Because of people like this:



This is Meryl Dorey, President of the deliberately misleadingly named [Australian Vaccination Network](#). I came to learn of the actions of Meryl and others like her through listening to podcasts. Meryl and the AVN are Australian leaders in the anti-vaccination movement. Crazy, isn't it, that people are opposed to the very thing that, along with clean water and improved sanitation, have improved our life spans and allowed us to thrive as a species. Her qualifications? 20 years of "researching" vaccines - aka learning how to Google - and a brain. Really. Publish studies in peer review journals? Why no, Meryl takes those studies done by actual researchers and reinterprets them to fit her anti-vaccination paradigm. Much like how your children attempt to reinterpret the chore list you leave them. Except all that leaves you with is a sink full of dirty dishes; Meryl's reinterpretations lead to potentially deadly diseases regaining a foothold in our communities.

What really pushed my buttons about Meryl and the AVN, however, was her actions in relation to the death of a week old baby of pertussis. She demanded the medical records of the child, publicly stated the baby "supposedly" died of pertussis - also known as whooping cough - despite a confirmed diagnosis and indirectly blamed the parents for their child's death by not breastfeeding. Her supporters sent horrid letters harassing the grieving family. When I heard about her antics I became quite outraged and decided it was time to stop listening and start acting.

I found the Facebook group [Stop the AVN](#). Until 2009 Meryl Dorey had been given a free ride in the Australian media. She was called on to present the "other side" of vaccines in the name of journalistic balance. What a load of crap - while there may be two sides to a story vaccines are not stories, they are science. She positioned herself

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