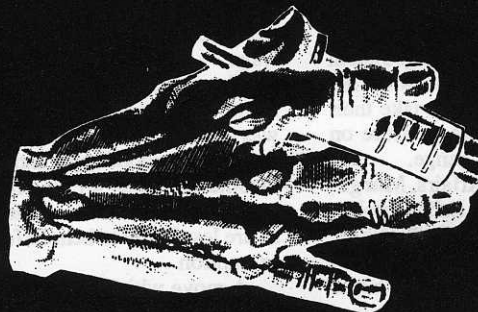


SHOTS IN THE DARK

Sizing Up Immunisation



"They've
got
something,
- these kids"



Hilary Butler doesn't know if she would have become interested in the immunisation issue if the labour and delivery of her first child Ian, now seven, was as rosy as the doctors painted it.

Her paediatrician put Ian on antibiotics and then a nurse gave Hilary a form authorising a BCG against tuberculosis. "He was already getting two injections every eight hours, so I said no. The doctors and nurses hoed into me about being irresponsible. I asked for more information about the pros and cons of immunisation and queried why a baby should be given a live bacterial vaccine while on broad spectrum antibiotics. They said nothing, disappeared, and I heard no more about it. Later my GP insisted that from his experience he had seen how essential immunisation was. When I asked him how long he had been in practice, he replied three months!"

Hilary has been doing her own research on immunisation ever since and urges all mothers to start asking questions of their doctors, and to examine the evidence of children with side effects.

"Parents need to be well acquainted with information. Either decision – to immunise or not – is a difficult one and they have to be prepared to face the consequences. Not immunising is not for the faint-hearted, but knowing what we do now, we could not do it.

"There are so many unresolved ques-

Useful guard or
risky panacea?
More and more parents
are choosing not to have
their children immunised.

They believe this is less
dangerous than the
potential side effects
of the vaccines.

Are they really the
crackpots the "experts"
dismiss them as?

**Lisa Sabbage
finds out**

tions about the immune system, especially that of children. Children have immature immunity – immunisation is like an assault on their system. The vaccines can trigger other conditions which otherwise remain latent and do nothing."

Five years ago in Canada, Katie Kortekaas took her three month old baby Maureen for her first checkup. While the doctor weighed her Katie, took her two

year old, Kevin, to the toilet. When they got back Maureen was crying and an empty vaccine vial and syringe lay on the table. Katie was furious, she hadn't had a chance to tell the doctor that Kevin had a really bad reaction to the DPT shot (which in New Zealand contains three different vaccines: diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus). Katie remembers the doctor's reply, "There's nothing to worry about."

But there *was* something to worry about. That night Maureen shrieked in 20 minute stretches, fell asleep exhausted, only to wake up screaming again, throwing her head back and forth. Her fever was hitting 102 degrees.

Maureen's personality changed in the weeks that followed her first shot. From being active and playful, she turned into an uninterested and cranky baby. Seeking help from her doctor in August, Katie was told it was just a stage Maureen was going through – "All you mothers are the same – calm down, enjoy it, she's a fine baby," he said and then he gave her a second DPT shot. Katie recalls that she stood there and let him do it, that she believed him, he had convinced her even though there had been no real discussion.

Maureen is now five years old and just learning to sit up. Mentally, her development is about that of a six month old. She suffers from frequent, severe seizures and the medication she must take costs up to \$250 a month. Two North American doctors have diagnosed her as brain damaged.

