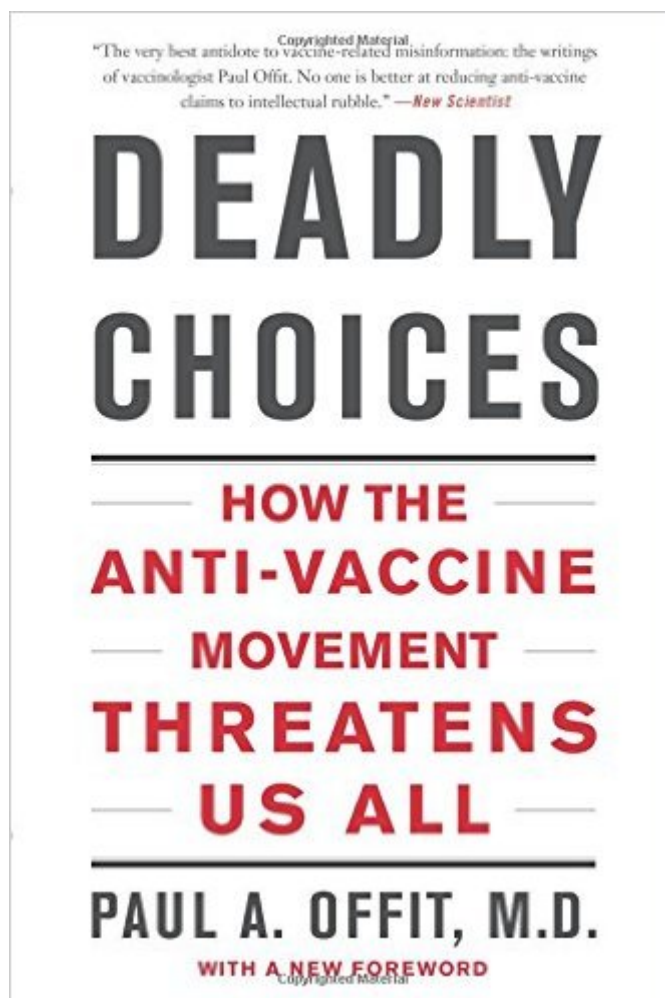


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# Deadly Choices: How The Anti-Vaccine Movement Threatens Us All



## Synopsis

In 2014, California suffered the largest and deadliest outbreak of pertussis, also known as whooping cough, in more than fifty years. This tragedy was avoidable. An effective vaccine has been available since the 1940s. In recent years other diseases, like measles and mumps, have also made a comeback. The reason for these epidemics can be traced to a group whose vocal proponents insist, despite evidence to the contrary, that vaccines are poison. As a consequence, parents and caretakers are rejecting vaccines for themselves and their families. In *Deadly Choices*, infectious-disease expert Paul Offit takes a look behind the curtain of the anti-vaccine movement. What he finds is a reminder of the power of scientific knowledge, and the harm we risk if we ignore it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I spied this book at our local library and knew I had to read it. I am no stranger to the controversy regarding vaccination, as it is a frequently discussed topic in the homeschooling community. Our small group is split fairly evenly between those who never miss a recommended immunization and those who would never consider any type of immunization. Fortunately, amongst our group the disagreement is amicable. (One of the things I love about homeschool- independence is valued!) I will freely admit that I am in the pro-vaccine court. I know that side effects- even death- are possible, but in weighing the potential damage from a vaccine and potential damage from disease....well, immunization seems the lesser of evils. I expect that those who choose differently go through the

same painstaking inner dialogue, they just end up in a different place. I'm okay with that. This book is also solidly pro-vaccine, but I think it does a pretty decent job of presenting the pros AND cons of the situation. There have been situations where vaccines were contaminated. There have been situations where vaccines were just a bad idea (live polio virus). And, there have been situations where disease has swept through unvaccinated communities at an alarming rate. Offit covers all this and more, without the intense fear mongering often found in this type of manuscript. A person so inclined could skip the commentary and just read the studies presented. He does seem to be a bit harsh when speaking about those in the anti-vaccine movement. I can certainly grasp that he thinks they are making a mistake without the thinly veiled references to their moral character. He might garner more respect from that camp if he offered it up himself! My verdict: Read it!

The focus of *Deadly Choices* is on the history of the introduction of new vaccines and the anti-vaccine movements that tend to follow. Offit is a prominent virologist and he doesn't hide his scorn for some in the anti-vaccine movement. His book is unlikely to change the minds of anyone who is firmly within that movement, but I'm not sure what would. The book is a must read for anyone interested in a detailed, well-written, and thoroughly sourced discussion of the scientific basis of vaccines, the real and imagined risks of vaccination, and the consequences of the choices we make about vaccines. The politics of the vaccine debate are powerful, and they often overshadow the substance. It's remarkable how many people managed to read and write "reviews" of this book within 2 days of its release on December 28. A few even managed to review the book before it was released! Given that few of these reviews mention anything about the book's contents, I suspect many of the reviewers, both positive and negative, have not read it. I actually have read the book. Given that I had written about the vaccine/autism debate in the past (from the perspective of trying to understand the sorts of evidence people use when drawing causal conclusions), I requested and received a review copy of the book from the publisher 6 weeks before its publication. Not surprisingly, the book thoroughly documents some of the unfounded claims that the anti-vaccine movement has made and explains the biological reasons why some of the perceived risks of vaccines either are not a risk or physiologically CAN'T be a risk. For example, many of the "green our vaccines" campaigns are based on the concern that there are nasty chemicals in vaccines, which is true.

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