

RESEARCHERS CAN'T TELL IF SHOTS ARE SLOWING CHICKENPOX

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Newsgroups: misc.kids.health

Subject: Who knows if the chickenpox vaccine works? Not the CDC!

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from the Colorado Springs "Gazette" [2/10/98]:

Epidemiologists have no way of telling if the 3-year-old vaccine against chickenpox is doing the job because doctors have stopped reporting cases of chickenpox to their local and state health departments.

Between 1987 and 1997, the reported national incidence of chickenpox dropped by 58 percent, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Monday the number of states reporting dropped as well.

In 1997, only 14 states continued to report chickenpox cases to the CDC. But even those states aren't consistent about it, the CDC says. That will make it hard to tell if the chickenpox vaccine is working. About 26 percent of children on average have received the chickenpox vaccine since it was licensed in 1995, but state vaccination levels can range from 4 to 40 percent.

The CDC began national surveillance for chickenpox deaths in 1998, and as of Jan. 1, deaths are required to be reported. In the meantime, while states come up to speed, the CDC is looking for alternative ways to monitor chickenpox and to determine if the vaccine is cutting disease rates.

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Psssst, CDC--Why don't you stop reporting the incidence of chickenpox *altogether*? Then you can announce that the disease has been eradicated (thanks to routine vaccination, of course!). Hmmm... might work with various other "vaccine-preventable" diseases as well. Yeah, that's the ticket... :o)

JG