

The hate I saw in Denmark

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LOCAL EVENTS

Beaux Arts Ball

The Beaux Arts Ball, honoring Elaine and Kevin Kauffman, Leslie and Noel Ginsburg and Dianne Eddolls and Glenn Jones, is Saturday, Feb. 21, 6 p.m., at the Hyatt Regency.

TJE Wine & Cheese

The Jewish Experience's Wine and Cheese gala is Feb. 21, 8 p.m. at Infinity Park Center.

Boulder JCC

The Boulder JCC gala honoring Gail and Jerry Sloat and Beth and Michael Margolis is Feb. 21, 6:30 p.m., at Omni Interlocken Resort.

Livingston lecture

The Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society's 'Jews and Booze' lecture is Sunday, Feb. 22, 1 p.m., at DU's Sturm Hall.

DAT dinner

DAT honors Rabbi Daniel and Rivka Alter and Dr. Jonathan and Kim Fishman on Monday, Feb. 23, 6:45 p.m., at Comedy Works Landmark.

CHOICES

The CHOICES event with speaker Felice Friedson is Thursday, Feb. 26, 6-9 p.m., at Sheraton Denver Downtown.

VACCINATION

The medicine, the politics, the day schools



Shutterstock

By **ANDREA JACOBS**

IJN Senior Writer

In 1952, approximately 57,628 cases of polio were reported in the worst recorded polio epidemic in US history. Parents felt helpless. Footage of children confined to iron lung machines dominated the newsreels.

When large-scale polio immunizations were administered to children in the fall of 1955, parents willingly permitted their children to line up in their elementary schools for the vaccination.

The mass implementation of Jonas Salk's vaccine has wiped out polio in the US.

No one complained as immunizations against common and potentially dangerous childhood diseases like measles, mumps and

German measles (MMR) became available — except those who feared the needle's sting.

Fifteen years ago, the Center

'Herd immunity'

for Disease Control announced the eradication of measles.

But measles has made a recent resurgence in America — originating at California's Disneyland, no less — that some attribute to the growing opposition to immunization.

The anti-vaccination movement, a relatively low percent of very vocal advocates, launched in 1998 after

the now disgraced British physician Andrew Wakefield purportedly showed a link between MMR immunizations and autism.

Wakefield's medical license was revoked.

Although the research was disproven scientifically, some parents of autistic children continue to believe a relationship exists — and others have joined the opposition.

Even before the current measles outbreak, which has spread to at least 14 states, including Colorado, the immunization divide had entered the political arena.

During the 2012 presidential

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Denmark wake-up call

Guns outside shul, as in France, Belgium

By **CNAAN LIPHSHIZ**

JTA

COPENHAGEN — From the window of the Jewish Community of Copenhagen's crisis center, Finn Schwarz can see his country changing before his eyes.

Hours after the slaying of a guard outside the Danish capital's main synagogue early Sunday morning, Feb. 15, two police officers toting

Escalating incidents of anti-Semitism in Denver

machine guns were on patrol outside the center — a common sight in France, Belgium and other trouble spots for Jews, but which resistant authorities in Denmark had previously considered both excessive and unpalatable.

"I think this attack was a wake-up call," said Schwarz, a former community chairman who has lobbied the authorities for years, often in vain, for greater security.

"What we have long feared happened and we will now see a changed Denmark. We have never seen this much security and guns before."

The deployment of armed officers at Jewish institutions came within hours of a shooting at a Copenhagen cafe where a caricaturist who had lampooned Islam was speaking.

One person was killed at the cafe in what Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt called a terrorist attack.

Later that night, Dan Uzan, a 37-year old volunteer security guard, was with two police officers at the Great Synagogue when a gunman opened fire with an automatic weapon, killing Uzan and wounding the officers.

The trio were standing guard over approximately 80 people who had gathered for a Bat Mitzvah celebration in a building behind the synagogue.

Guests reportedly took shelter in the basement after the shooting and later were escorted out under heavy guard.

On Sunday morning, Danish police killed a 22-year-old man in a shootout who they said was a Muslim extremist responsible for both shootings. The shooter was later identified as Omar El-Hussein.

Throughout the day Sunday, heavily armed police officers remained deployed across the capital and beyond as authorities hunted for

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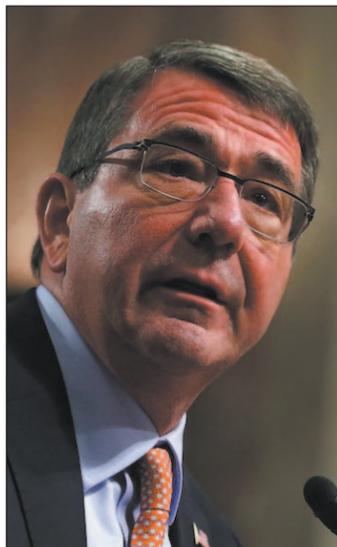


Despite speech brouhaha US-Israel defense links strong

By **DMITRIY SHAPIRO**

Washington Jewish Week

WASHINGTON — American-Israeli relations may be enduring a challenging period due to the political drama surrounding Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's upcoming speech to Congress, but you'd never know it from the recent confirmation hearing for defense secretary nom-



New US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter

ator had been sharply critical of Israel and the pro-Israel lobby.

Carter, a former deputy secre-

tary of defense whose views on Iran are believed to be more hawkish than those of President Barack Obama, mentioned Israel only once during the hearing — in response to a question from Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) on the danger posed by a nuclear-armed Iran.

"Well, if you take at face value what they say, they have the ambition to wipe off the map other states in the region, namely Israel," Carter said.

"They have a long history of behaving in a disruptive way, of supporting terrorism, of trying to undermine other governments operating around the world. So I think they give abundant evidence that they're not the kind of people you want to have having nuclear weapons."

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inee Ashton Carter.

Carter's appearance on Feb. 4 before the Senate Armed Services Committee was free of the sharp exchanges over Israel featured in the confirmation hearing of the current defense secretary, Chuck Hagel, who as a Republican sen-

90% of Colorado parents vaccinate

That leaves a 4.6% exemption rate — but rates in some schools are as high as 20%

VACCINATION from Page 1

race, Michele Bachman linked vaccines to autism.

In the 2016 presidential season, Sen. Ted Cruz and other potential candidates have turned the issue into one of individual choice vs. government control.

No matter how or why politicians spin immunization vs. anti-immunization, it is predominantly a medical phenomena based upon a scientific paradigm.

Dr. Rachel Herlihy, acting director of the Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment's division of disease control and environmental epidemiology, says that Colorado has a 90% immunization rate and a 4.6% exemption rate.

"Probably close to 90% of Colorado parents vaccinate their children," she tells the *Intermountain Jewish News*. "And I know [the exemption rate] sounds low.

"But this amounts to 3,000 kindergartners who are not vaccinated each year."

"Herd" or "community immunity" directly affects a community's ability to withstand the spread of disease to children who are not immunized.

And any decrease in the herd

'The whole point is protecting our children'

immunity's immunization rates increases vulnerability to contagion.

For example, an effective herd immunity to combat measles, an extremely contagious disease, requires at least a 94% immunization rate.

That immunological buffer extends protection to children who have never been vaccinated against the measles.

"Exemption rates vary in different communities," Herlihy notes. "Some schools have an exemption rate as high as 20%.

"The issue is that the unvaccinated rate is much higher in certain childcare centers and schools, which would contribute to an alarming outbreak of measles and other diseases."

Colorado law restricts exemptions for public school immunizations to three areas: medical, religious and personal. It is one of 19 states in the US that allows a personal choice option.

Private schools and institutions, which are not bound by Colorado statutes, have more latitude in narrowing acceptable exemptions or even eliminating them.

The *IJN* contacted the Loup JCC, Denver Jewish Day School, DAT and Hillel Academy regarding their policies on immunization. Some take strong positions and are tightening up on the type of exemptions. Others permit all three options but impose stringent reporting procedures.

The Loup JCC, which instituted its current immunization policy two years ago, is in the midst of making additional changes according to JCC Assistant Executive Director Caron Blanke.

"We are amending the number of acceptable medical exemptions because it was too broad," says Blanke, adding that the community center's policy omits religious and personal objections to non-vaccinations.

"Our original intent was to be inclusive of children who had authentic reasons for an exemption. We were getting everything from 'my physician agrees with me' to other, often ambiguous explanations, she says.

JCC-MACC's immunization policy, which Blanke emailed to the *IJN*, states that it is "based on the recommendations and legal requirements of the Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment.

"Specifically, the JCC-MACC requires that all children and staff participating in its summer programs and ECC be up to date on their MMR and Varicella (chickenpox) vaccines."

The policy will only exempt children and staff who present a valid medical exemption signed by a physician unrelated to the child or adult.

"Unimmunized children have a substantially higher risk of bringing pertussis, measles and chickenpox into our camps," according to the policy. "The risk is increased when campers from other countries enroll in camp.

"Therefore, it is especially important that campers from other countries be fully immunized."

JCC-MACC's policy also encourages vaccinating overnight campers against meningococcal meningitis even though the immunization is not on the list of Colorado required school vaccines.

"The whole point is to protect our community and keep everyone as healthy as possible," Blanke says.

Avi Halzel, head of school and CEO of Denver Jewish Day School (K-12), also commented on and submitted the Jewish day's schools immunization policy via email.

"Denver Jewish Day School is an independent school and a member of ACIS (Assn. of Colorado Independent Schools), NAIS (National Assn. of Independent Schools) and RAVSAK (the Jewish community day school network)," Halzel explains.

"We are reviewing our current policy that follows state guidelines for immunizations. However, we are reviewing this and considering an alternative policy."

The first item under review is whether an independent school in Colorado has the legal ability to craft and enforce an immunization policy "that differs from state regulations," he writes.

ACIC is currently researching the issue, "with legal consultation," on behalf of member schools.

Halzel then quotes Denver JDS' immunization policy as presented in the school's **Family Handbook**:

"Colorado law requires that no student be admitted to school without showing a valid immunization certificate. Therefore, we request an updated copy of each student's immunization card be submitted to the office at the beginning of each school year" if there have been additions.

"All new students must submit an up-to-date immunization form," the policy continues. "Please request this form from your student's physician . . . and send it in with your



PRO-IMMUNIZATION

Dr. Jordan Abbott

other registration forms."

Halzel did not elaborate on current exemptions enforced at Denver JDS.

The board of DAT, a modern Orthodox K-12 Jewish day school, met on Feb. 9 to implement a significant change to its immunization policy, according to Rabbi Daniel Alter, head of school.

"The new policy says that the school will only accept medical exemptions to immunization," Alter tells the *IJN*. "There is no personal exemption that may put others at risk."

He describes the percentage of unvaccinated children in Denver as "frighteningly high — and the more unvaccinated children, the higher the risk."

For Alter, adjustments to DAT's immunization policy reflect "a basic health issue.

"One personal decision can affect the entire community," he says. "There is a moral and an ethical responsibility to care for the safety and health of our kids."

Alter cites medical probability to illustrate the board's concerns.

"For example, if we had a student who could not be vaccinated due to medical reasons, and 15% of parents refusing to immunize their children due to personal choice, this puts many children at risk," he says.

This refusal would especially affect children whose immune systems are already compromised by chemotherapy or certain medical conditions, he says.

Alter adds that there are no religious objections to vaccines in Judaism.

"A number of *responsa* have been written by famous rabbis on whether you can receive a vaccination on Shabbat," he says.

"Many authorities say, 'If that's the only opportunity you have to get vaccinated, then you do it on Shabbat.'"

Hillel Academy, an Orthodox K-8 day school, does not require immunizations but "we strongly recommend them," says Joanne O'Connor, speaking on behalf of Principal Yitzchok Goldstein.

"We realize that not all parents

want to vaccinate their children," O'Connor says. "However, we do request that they notify us if they have chosen this path for their children."

O'Connor estimates that "maybe one or two families" of Hillel Academy students have declined vaccinations for their children.

The Orthodox Union, motivated by the ongoing measles outbreak, issued a statement on Feb. 10 urging Orthodox parents to immunize their children.

The OU and the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) "strongly urge all parents to vaccinate their healthy children on the timetable recommended by their pediatrician."

In its brief mention of the "fraudulent" study correlating autism with the MMR vaccine in 1998, the OU essentially negates the personal exemption status.

As for Halachah, or Jewish law, the organizations stress that Judaism "places the highest value on preserving human life. It is well known that those facing even a *potential* life or death situation are instructed to set aside the Sabbath and other key tenets of halachic observance until the emergency has passed.

"Prayers for good health and for the complete and perfect healing of the ill are an age-old aspect of Jewish tradition," the statement reads. "But prayers must go hand-in-hand with availing oneself of medical science, including vaccinations."

The letter concludes with the halachic obligations to care for one's own health as well as taking measures to prevent harm and illness to others.

"Jewish law defers to the consensus of medical experts in determining and prescribing appropriate medical responses to illness and prevention," it states.

"Therefore, the consensus of major halachic decisors supports the vaccination of children to protect them from disease, to eradicate illness from the larger community through the so-called herd immunity, and thus to protect others who may be vulnerable."

Dr. Jordan Abbott, an allergy and immunology specialist at National Jewish Health, often sees children who have not been immunized because of allergies and compromised immune systems.

"In my particular field, I see children who are not vaccinated and I must address the reason, whether it's asthma, food allergies or primary immune deficiencies," he says.

"Some of them aren't able to tolerate vaccines such as MMR, which contains live or attenuated viruses, because their immune systems are too weak."

Medical regulations prevent administering the MMR vaccination to children under the age of one — which means this entire age group is at risk for measles.

"Regarding the current measles outbreak, any child under age one is at risk for getting one of the most contagious viral diseases," Abbott says.

Children undergoing chemotherapy, bone marrow transplants, or have immune deficiencies are also extremely vulnerable.

During an epidemic, it is con-

ceivable that the CDC might lower the age for MMR immunizations, he says.

"And any healthy child over age one who has not been vaccinated is at risk for measles and other diseases," Abbott stresses.

He has encountered parents who are worried about a link between the MMR vaccination and autism.

Although Abbott explains that Wakefield's 1998 study and all subsequent studies have never uncovered a connection between MMR and autism, some parents remain skeptical.

"Many people think the inability to come up with a causal relationship was a conscious act by the organized medical community," he says. "It's as if they are stuck in a position where they no longer believe that medical establishment is credible.

"But maybe that's symptomatic of a larger mistrust."

Abbott says an allergist should assess all parental concerns regarding an allergic reaction.

Abbott says that the measles outbreak in Disneyland originated with an international traveler or travelers to the US.

"Virtually every case in America has been traced to those who trav-

Unvaccinated children spread the current outbreak

eled to the US internationally," Abbott says, adding that they might live in areas with lax vaccination regulations or an underdeveloped country.

But the spread of measles in America stems from US citizens who have not been immunized.

"The spread is attributed to non-vaccinations," Abbott says. "If a traveler carried a foreign virus here but everyone had been vaccinated against MMR, no one would have contracted measles."

This includes children who caught the mumps but not the measles before vaccines were developed but have not been immunized as adults.

"There's a larger population out at risk for contracting measles than people realize," he says.

Abbott strongly advocates vaccinations and following the CDC's immunization timeline.

"Over two-thirds of children who end up contracting measles were never immunized, even though they were the right age, because their parents decided against it.

"This is a real public health concern."

As for the absence of trust some parents exhibit toward the medical profession, Abbott suggests that the best antidote is developing a long-term relationship with the family.

"If the refusal to vaccinate a child is predicated upon a general distrust of medical authorities, the doctor must reestablish that trust. Our overwhelming concern is for the health of the children."

Herlihy of the Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment agrees.

"Personal choice is allowed under the Colorado statute, and we respect that choice," she says.

"But we do know that children who are not vaccinated put themselves, and their community, at greater risk."

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