

CMDA Ethics Statement

Immunization

PERSONAL SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Since the pioneering work of Edward Jenner and others in developing a vaccination for smallpox over 200 years ago, immunization has been of great benefit to individuals as well as the public. Immunization practices have prevented outbreaks of communicable diseases and resultant deaths or disability and continue to prevent an ever-increasing variety of illnesses.

The immunization process is based on safely activating the body's own defense system against a specific disease. As with other medical treatments, it carries a small but real risk of an adverse reaction.

CMDA agrees with current medical opinion that immunizations are of great benefit to the individual and society. The decision to immunize an individual relies on the similar decision-making process used for that of any other medical treatment.

CMDA recognizes that immunization benefits society by protecting public health and that individual members of society have reciprocal obligations to the society in which they live.

CMDA acknowledges the right of an individual to refuse immunization except in extraordinary public health circumstances. This decision may be motivated by moral or religious convictions, known risk, misinformation or fear. Christians need to base their decisions on accurate information. Those who model their lives in imitation of Christ should reflect on their obligation to take personal risk for the good of others.

CMDA supports the current scientific literature that validates the general practice of immunization as a safe, effective, and recommended procedure.

IMMUNIZATION AND POTENTIAL FOR MORAL COMPLICITY WITH EVIL

The use of medical information and technology obtained through immoral means raises concerns about moral complicity with evil*. Some currently available vaccines were developed using tissue from aborted fetuses, while others use technology or knowledge acquired from the use of aborted fetuses. We need to consider carefully whether it is morally permissible to benefit from knowledge or technology obtained from the intentional destruction of human life.

We attempt to determine whether our participation is appropriately distanced or inappropriately complicit by consideration of the medical facts and of our conscience as informed by the revealed Word of God.

CMDA provides the following examples to help determine whether it is permissible to manufacture, administer or receive a specific vaccine:

- Using technology that was developed without any intentional destruction of human life or other evil is morally ideal. Most vaccines in use to date fall into this category.
- Using technology developed from tissue of an intentionally aborted fetus, but without continuing the cell line from that fetus, may be morally acceptable.

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- Continued use of a cell line developed from an intentionally aborted fetus poses moral questions and must be decided as a matter of conscience, weighing the clear moral obligation to protect the health of our families and society against the risk of complicity with evil.
- Using a vaccine that requires the continued destruction of human life is morally unacceptable.

CMDA encourages the use of and endorses the further development of medically effective and ethically permissible alternatives that do not raise the question of moral complicity.

See CMDA Statement on Moral Complicity With Evil

*Approved by the House of Delegates
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Amended by the House of Representatives June 11, 2004 2 abstentions.