

## Damning Verdict on MMR doctor: Anger as GMC Attacks 'Callous Disregard' For Sick Children

By Fiona Macrae and David Wilkes, dailymail.co.uk. [is.gd/7ji8l](https://is.gd/7ji8l)

The doctor who sparked the MMR controversy faces being struck off for showing a 'callous disregard' for the suffering of children.

Andrew Wakefield, who first linked the triple jab to autism and bowel problems, acted 'dishonestly and irresponsibly' when publicising his research, the General Medical Council ruled yesterday.



**After the hearing: Dr Andrew Wakefield with wife Carmel at GMC HQ in London**

Its verdict at the end of the longest and most expensive hearing in its 148-year history was supposed to draw a line under the 12-year saga provoked by his study of 12 autistic children published in the Lancet.

Instead there were extraordinary scenes as parents at the hearing voiced their support for the doctor.

One, Allison Edwards, shouted 'this is a set-up, it's disgusting', and stormed out. Another shouted: 'Bastards.' Dr Wakefield did not attend the reading of the verdict but appeared outside the GMC's central London headquarters, and was followed down the street by chants of 'For he's a jolly good fellow'.

The doctor later said he was 'extremely disappointed' and branded as 'unfounded and unjust' the allegations against him and two research colleagues.

Dr Wakefield's supporters claim he was the victim of a witch-hunt because none of the families featured in the controversial study complained to the GMC. The parents of the children he treated say he is guilty only of doing his job properly.

The GMC went out of its way to say it is assessing the way Dr Wakefield went about his research and not the validity of his findings, but to many, it is the safety of MMR that was on trial.

The hearing, which started in July 2007, centred on a study of a dozen children by Dr Wakefield and 12 doctors which linked the MMR jab with autism and bowel problems.

It was published in the Lancet, the highly respected medical journal, in 1998 but stopped short of blaming the triple jab for the children's symptoms.

But, at a press conference, Dr Wakefield said there were 'sufficient anxieties for a case to be made' to give the three vaccines separately.

Numerous other studies, including one involving three million children, failed to make the link.

But vaccination rates went into freefall, and in 2006 a 13-year-old boy died in the country's first measles fatality for 14 years.

Another death followed two years later.

The controversy reached its peak in late 2001 when Tony and Cherie Blair refused to say if their son, Leo, had been vaccinated.

The GMC started to investigate Dr Wakefield in 2004 when the Lancet publicly rejected the paper because he had failed to declare he had received £55,000 in legal aid to advise the solicitors working for parents considering suing over MMR.

The money went into an account held for his research funds at the Royal Free Hospital in London.

Two of his fellow researchers, professors John Walker-Smith and Simon Murch, were also brought before the GMC but faced fewer allegations.

Yesterday, after listening to 36 witnesses give evidence over 148 days, at a cost of more than £1million, the five-member panel upheld a raft of charges against the three.

The GMC said Dr Wakefield took blood samples from youngsters at his son's birthday party in the late 1990s and then laughed about it during a U.S. presentation in March 1999.

The panel's chairman Dr Surinder Kumar said: 'Despite your explanation that you did not consider it unethical to obtain blood in this way, the panel found that it was unethical and that you did not have ethical approval for such an undertaking.

'It also found that you showed a callous disregard for the distress and pain you knew or ought to have known the children involved might suffer. You abused your

position of trust as a medical practitioner.' Dr Kumar said Dr Wakefield's conduct at the U.S. seminar 'was such as to bring the medical profession into disrepute'.

Dr Wakefield was also found to have ordered some of the youngsters featured in the Lancet article to undergo unnecessary colonoscopies, barium meals, blood and urine tests and brain scans.

Some of the tests were carried out by professors Walker-Smith and Murch.

The GMC said Dr Wakefield was 'dishonest' in not telling the Legal Aid Board that some of the £55,000 he received went towards wages for his staff, rather than the specific tests and care he had outlined. However, he did not gain personally from the money.

He was also criticised for not telling the Lancet he had filed a patent for a measles vaccine to rival MMR, and for starting a child on an experimental drug called Transfer Factor, which he planned to produce and sell, without the necessary paediatric qualifications.

The panel decided the allegations against the three doctors could amount to serious professional misconduct and will rule on their fate at a later hearing.

Last night, as parents of the 'Lancet 12' stood by the trio, Jackie Fletcher of vaccination support group Jabs said: 'This has been a witch-hunt against the three doctors.'

The bottom line is that no parent has complained and no child has been injured.' But the medical establishment gave the vaccine its full backing, with 12 organisations including the British Medical Association endorsing a statement which states there is no link between MMR and autism.

'Not one parent ever complained. He was the only doctor who ever listened to us'

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