



The Threat of Self-Spreading Vaccines

Description

USA: It may sound like the plot of a science fiction movie, but U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded scientists have been secretly working on genetically-engineered live virus vaccines, which they refer to as “contagious” vaccines, that can transmit vaccine strain viruses through a population on their own. The vaccines are so contagious that only five percent of the population would need to receive the shot, while the other 95 percent would be passively vaccinated through vaccine strain infection, shedding and transmission.

A “contagious” vaccine would spread swiftly as people come in close contact with body fluids of a recently vaccinated person, such as saliva or nasal secretions, like when a person sneezes or coughs and inhales droplets from someone infected with a cold or influenza virus.^{[1](#)} Spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers in the United States, Europe and Australia are looking into the using these types of community transmissible vaccines in the future.^{[2](#)}

Live Polio Vaccine Infected Populations with Polio Vaccine Strain Virus

The live oral polio vaccine (OPV) was the first vaccine that public health officials used to deliberately infect populations with a vaccine strain virus as a strategy to try to prevent wild type polio infections. In fact, one reason OPV was considered superior to the inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) was because it passively revaccinated people coming into close contact with recently vaccinated persons (without their knowledge or informed consent).^{[3](#)} Recipients of OPV-shed vaccine strain virus in urine, feces, saliva and nasal secretions, and in populations where OPV is used, cases of vaccine strain polio paralysis can occur in recently vaccinated persons or close contacts, such as parents changing the diapers of a recently vaccinated baby.^{[4](#)} In 1999, the U.S. stopped recommending OPV for children and switched to IPV to eliminate cases of vaccine strain polio.

The environmental impact of vaccine strain polio virus contaminating water supplies re-surfaced recently in London, U.K. where “vaccine derived poliovirus type 2 (VDPV2)” was detected and public

health officials urged everyone to be “up to date” on polio vaccinations.⁵ In 2014, Barbara Loe Fisher, co-founder and president of the National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC) and executive editor of *The Vaccine Reaction*, published a referenced report, *The Emerging Risks of Live Virus and Virus Vectored Vaccines: Vaccine Strain Infection, Shedding and Transmission*, which reviewed the potential for harm that use of live virus and vectored vaccines could do to humans and the environment.⁶

She warned:

In light of long standing, significant gaps in scientific knowledge about infectious microbes, the microbiome, epigenetics and the nature of human health, the long term safety and effectiveness of using live attenuated virus vaccines and genetically modified virus-vectored vaccines have not yet been established.

Self-Spreading Vaccines in the Animal Population

The first experiment with contagious vaccines was conducted on an island off of the coast of Spain in 1999. Veterinarian José Manuel Sánchez-Vizcaíno, PhD captured 147 rabbits and vaccinated 73 of them with a self-spreading vaccine he created combining rabbit hemorrhagic disease and myxoma virus. He placed a microchip in all of the rabbits to monitor them before releasing them back into the wild. Because the vaccine was so closely related to the disease causing myxoma virus, Dr. Sánchez-Vizcaíno believed that the vaccine would spread along rabbits in the wild. When the veterinarian recaptured the rabbits about a month later, he found that 56 percent of the unvaccinated rabbits had antibodies to both viruses.⁷

Currently, self-spreading vaccines are being tested in animal populations across the world. Approximately 10 labs worldwide are working on developing contagious vaccines as of September 2020.⁸ The majority of the labs are in the U.S. with others located in Europe and Australia. The sources of funding for this research comes from NIH, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), academic institutions and the Gates Foundation.⁹

Researchers in Europe are currently working with contagious vaccines in pig populations.¹⁰ DARPA is considering self-spreading vaccines to help combat West African Lassa fever, a viral disease spread by rats in West Africa.¹¹¹² Contagious vaccines are currently being made for Ebola and bovine tuberculosis, while researchers are considering developing self-spreading vaccines to help control Lyme disease, West Nile virus, rabies and the plague. They believe that self-spreading vaccines are an ideal way to vaccinate wild animals to reduce the risk that one day the viruses and bacteria will spontaneously jump from animals to humans.¹³

Researchers are developing two types of contagious wildlife vaccines: (1) transferrable vaccines, which are applied to the animal's fur by way of a paste that will spread the vaccine via grooming and other close contact activities; and (2) transmissible vaccines, which are injected or taken orally, and allow the virus to spread through breathing, touch, sexual relations, and nursing. While transmissible vaccines have the potential to vaccinate more remote animals at a faster rate, some scientists are concerned that the speed at which transmissible vaccines spread vaccine strain infection could pose a

greater risk of mutation or co-infection with other viruses in the wild, which then could infect humans.

The Ethical Implications of Self-Spreading Human Vaccines

Research on contagious vaccines is not limited to the wild animal population. Scientists believe they can develop self-spreading vaccines using viruses and bacteria, which can be transmitted from person to person worldwide but not cause serious illness. The majority of self-spreading vaccines use viral vector technology similar to the technology used by the virus vectored AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson COVID vaccines.[14](#)

Scientists make a weakened form of the target virus, such as the HIV virus, in a lab and insert DNA from it into a more contagious but milder virus, such as one of the viruses that cause symptoms of the common cold. DNA fragments from the target virus, in effect, hitch a ride along with the more innocuous virus and spread it among the population, which scientist say primes the immune system to be prepared for the targeted more dangerous virus and, hopefully, does not cause serious disease, injury or death along the way. Their plan is for a small group of people in different parts of the world to either be injected with or inhale a contagious vaccine that would self-spread across the globe.[15](#)

“Some people will die” When Humans Are Exposed to Contagious Vaccines

The U.K. government is looking into using this contagious vaccine technology instead of the current influenza vaccine to combat type A and B influenza. While scientists admit that some people would die from this type of clandestine mass vaccination strategy, they believe that because the number of people who may die from self-spreading vaccination would be less than the number of people who may die from the actual influenza, this type of secret passive vaccination plan is justified.[16](#)

According to a U.K. government report:

Self-spreading vaccines are less lethal but not non-lethal: they can still kill. Some people will die who would otherwise have lived, though fewer people die overall.[17](#)

Meanwhile, other researchers warn that self-spreading novel vaccine technology could produce dire consequences. Jonas Sandbrink, biosecurity researcher at the University of Oxford's Future of Humanity Institute warns:

Once you set something engineered and self-transmissible out into nature, you don't know what happens to it and where it will go. Even if you just start by setting it out into animal populations, part of the genetic elements might find their way back into humans.[18](#)

No safety studies have been conducted in the field or laboratory for contagious vaccines.[19](#)

Andrew Peters, PhD, associate professor of wildlife health and pathology at Charles Sturt University in Australia and president of Wildlife Disease Association, warned:

Our understanding of infectious disease dynamics in wildlife remain for the most part too simple to meaningfully predict the outcome of such an intervention.[20](#)

Unknown Environmental Impact of Contagious Vaccines

Fillipa Lentozos, PhD, science and international security expert at Kings College London, cautions that it is hard to predict what a contagious vaccine could do in the future because viruses are inherently unstable and frequently mutate. There is concern that a virus exclusively found in certain wildlife could jump to other species and cause a host of problems for animals and humans alike.[21](#)

Another concern with wiping out diseases in wild animals through contagious vaccines is that certain species could become overpopulated once they are no longer susceptible to vaccine treated diseases. For example, rodents that contract Lassa virus destroy crops, homes, food and water storages and contribute to unsanitary conditions. If they no longer face the threat of Lassa virus, these rodents could become overpopulated and cause havoc.

Another issue is that, by disturbing the ecosystem where viruses and bacteria exist and exterminating one virus out of many, other viruses or bacteria may emerge to cause disease.

Dr. Andrew Peters suggests:

Dramatically shifting the balance by attempting to eradicate or reduce an endemic virus in nature could risk the emergence of other pathogens which impact both the wildlife species themselves, as well as people and our domestic animals.[22](#)

Critics of Contagious Vaccines Cite Precautionary Principle

Critics of contagious vaccines want to approach this technology using the Precautionary Principle which states that harmful technology should not be developed until we know with a reasonable degree of scientific certainty exactly how the technology will operate and what the short and long-term consequences may be. Setting about changes to wildlife population could threaten the biodiversity of the ecosystem.[23](#)

Science Journal recently issued a policy statement in which scientists warn that contagious vaccines are dangerous and difficult to manage and “genetically too unstable to be used safely and predictably outside contained facilities”[24](#) This risk is an “evidence-based norm” rather than an opinion, according to the scientists, and “as this norm now seems to be challenged,” there is the potential for “risky research on lab-modified self-spreading viruses.”[25](#)

The scientists criticizing self-spreading vaccines continue to urge caution...

Self-spreading vaccine research continues to proceed despite a lack of new information that would compellingly refute long-standing evidence-based norms in virology, evolutionary biology, vaccine development, international law, public health, risk assessment, and other disciplines.[26](#)

According to the policy statement, self-spreading vaccine research has taken off in recent years with programs being run currently by the European Union (E.U.), NIH and DARPA.[27](#)

Critics of self-spreading vaccine technology are concerned that contagious vaccines will not help curb the spread of animal diseases into humans but, instead, will make it easier for more animal viruses to infect into humans. They point out that once a new vaccine strain virus is released into the wild by way of a contagious vaccine, there will be no way to control it, and there is potential for the virus to mutate, cross borders, or jump species...[28](#)

the vast majority of virus species that currently exist are undescribed by science, making it very difficult to imagine how the considerable effort necessary to develop and test self-spreading vaccines could identify and then prioritize single viral species circulating in wildlife. That viruses are constantly mutating makes this task all the more onerous.[29](#)

Contagious Vaccines Could Be Turned Into Bioweapons

Scientists point out there are real concerns about the threat of self-spreading vaccine technology being used to create bioweapons. The same technology that is used to spread the vaccine could be used to spread deadly viruses or other diseases that, once released into the human population, cannot be controlled or could be used to forcibly sterilize large numbers of people.[30](#)

However, Daniel Streiker, PhD, a disease ecologist at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, who heads a lab conducting research on self-spreading vaccines, believes that there are easier ways to make bioweapons and supports pursuing research on contagious animal vaccines.

He said:

There's a lot of technology out there which can be misused. I don't think that's necessarily a reason in and of itself to dismiss technology that could potentially have enormous benefits. We're talking about potentially eliminating viruses that are killing people from animal populations, with a relati[31](#)

Click here to view References:

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