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From: Marie McCormick [mailto:mmccormi@hsph.harvard.edu]

Sent: Wednesday, June 09, 2004 10:42 AM

To:

Subject: Re: new proof of autism and mercury link

We reviewed this study in the recent IOM report. Dr. Hornig did a presentation before the committee. The text is quoted below:

Dr. Hornig did a presentation before the committee. On p. 60 of the report: "Although this model uses thimerosal and is possible more relevant to the discussion at hand [i.e. of rodent models], it assumes that autism is caused by an autoimmune reaction. A previous section [of the report] discussed the lack of evidence of autoimmune-mediated CNS damage in the brains of autistic patients.

The relevance of rodent models, including the three described above, is difficult to assess because the rodent "clinical" endpoints may not reflect human ones, because there is limited understanding of the etiology of autism, and because the methods used to cause changes in the animals may bear no relationship to pathogenesis of the human disease. **The committee accepts that under certain conditions, infections and heavy metals, including thimerosal, can injure the nervous system.** These rodent models are useful for understanding some of the processes by which these exogenous agents may exert their damage. However, the connection between these models and autism is theoretical."