6.7: The Role of the Health Professional

Health professionals are in a position to counter misinformation campaigns with evidence-based arguments. But most are busy focusing on the safe, effective delivery of care, not waging social media battles. Furthermore, many health professionals are uncertain of how to address concerns over vaccination and may be reluctant to confront anti-vaccination advocates. But the resurgence of measles and growing concern over vaccine hesitancy demonstrates a need for nurses, doctors, pharmacists, and other health professionals to play a more significant role in promoting public confidence in vaccines.

The anti-vaccine movement uses emotional stories to spread fear about vaccination, but health professionals can play an important role in reminding the public about the very real risk of vaccine-preventable disease. Many people have never seen a case of measles and did not grow up with a fear of polio. Health professionals can leverage scientific and historical knowledge to promote vaccines as a way of keeping those diseases in the past. You can also reflect on your own experiences to share stories about the harms of not vaccinating. It may be effective to share a story about your individual choice to vaccinate yourself and your family. Health professionals are the gatekeepers of the healthcare system and can make an important difference in the current misinformation battle over vaccines.

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