

**TRIB**
LIVE[\(HTTPS://TRIBLIVE.COM/HOME/\)](https://triblive.com/home/)

11 dead in shooting at Squirrel Hill synagogue

<https://triblive.com/local/allegHENY/14219575-74/pittsburgh-police-respond-to-incident-in-squirrel-hill>

NEWS [\(?PRINTERFRIENDLY=TRUE\)](#)

Vanaski: Vaccine scare theories debunked, but many don't know about the evidence

NAFARI VANASKI ([MAILTO:TRIBCITY@TRIBWEB.COM?SUBJECT=RE: VANASKI: VACCINE SCARE THEORIES DEBUNKED, BUT MANY DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE EVIDENCE STORY ON TRIBLIVE.COM](mailto:TRIBCITY@TRIBWEB.COM?SUBJECT=RE: VANASKI: VACCINE SCARE THEORIES DEBUNKED, BUT MANY DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE EVIDENCE STORY ON TRIBLIVE.COM)) | Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2015,

11:03 p.m.

The first time I talked to Nancy Minshew, she had a police escort.

That seemed highly unusual, considering it was a Monday night at [Penn Brewery](http://www.pennbrew.com/) (<http://www.pennbrew.com/>), and she was talking to a bunch of science geeks at a monthly gathering called Cafe Scientifique.

But it was 2008, and Minshew was rebutting the idea that vaccinations and autism were connected. Back then, the anti-vaccination campaign was pretty intense. There was a 1998 study tying autism to vaccinations, and there was Jenny McCarthy adding her two cents.

Now? McCarthy has surprisingly been largely discounted as an expert on autism or what causes it, and now is hard at work trying to ensure that no one watches any New Year's Eve programming.

Minshew has been proven right — in ways you don't want to be proven right. The intervening years have seen an outbreak in otherwise dormant diseases, such as measles, which can be avoided with a vaccine.

I interviewed Minshew back then for an autism series I was doing for Trib Total Media. I talked to parents, and they mostly didn't have nice things to say about her. Thus, the police escort.

My talk with Minshew back then made me think she was right, though. My children are vaccinated, despite a friend's repeated warning against it. The friend offered no definitive medical proof not to — as Minshew said. It's very difficult to persuade frightened people, even when you have the facts.

I started thinking about Minshew again after reading numerous stories about the re-emergence of several long-dormant diseases. Even though the science isn't there to support the anti-vaccination crowd, the sentiment remains. So I decided to contact her and ask why. ([HTTPS://TRIBLIVE.COM/HOME/](https://triblive.com/home/))

~~"I would say first that this issue is being raised by politicians for their purposes and not by doctors or researchers, who are very consistent in stating that vaccines do not cause autism, vaccines do save lives," she said in an email.~~

The most notable recent example of what she is talking about would be Rand Paul, a potential presidential candidate, who said that vaccines can lead to mental disorders.

He's since backed off, because, you know — science.

"The evidence is very strong and broad that vaccines do not cause autism," she said in an email. "Most powerfully is the evidence that abnormalities in brain development begin during pregnancy and are detectable within the first months of life."

Minshew, a professor of neurology and psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh and director of the Center For Autism Research there, said she thinks the anti-vaccination fervor has, comparatively, died down over the years. She thinks that most parents are following the vaccination schedules for their children.

"I think the conspiracy group is less empowered. We can see from Disneyland that non-vaccination is a tremendous risk to themselves and to those who are not yet or cannot be vaccinated, like infants, immunosuppressed and elderly," Minshew said, referring to the realization that most of the 102 January cases of measles in the U.S. could be traced to the theme park.

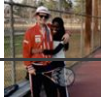
"In my view, those that hesitate (to vaccinate) are not familiar with the evidence. The scare news was front page news and on many talk shows," she said. "The thorough repudiation of those scare theories never received that kind of coverage and it needs to."

Nafari Vanaski is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. She can be reached at 412-856-7400, ext. 8669, nvanaski@tribweb.com (<mailto:nvanaski@tribweb.com>) or on Twitter [@NafariTrib](https://twitter.com/NafariTrib) (<https://twitter.com/NafariTrib>).

2 Comments



Sort by Oldest



Add a comment...

([HTTPS://TRIBLIVE.COM/HOME/](https://triblive.com/home/))



Charlie Wadd

Apparently the anti vaxxers are still relevant,, the newest measles outbreaks should tell us that much.

Like · Reply · 3y



Charlie Wadd

No more exceptions to the vaccinations,, if you feel your objections are religious in nature, homeschool your kid, most of the religious right say the kids are being taught by satan loving teachers anyway.

Like · Reply · 3y

Facebook Comments Plugin

TribLIVE commenting policy.

(<https://www.facebook.com/triblive>) ((<https://twitter.com/TribLIVE>))
 (<https://www.instagram.com/triblive/>) (/home/rss/)

© 2018 Trib Total Media, LLC | [Terms of Service](https://triblive.com/termservice/)