



ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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June 15, 2018

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Researchers of PLOS Medicine Journal Article on Immunizations Admit Error

PITTSBURGH – The researchers behind the recent PLOS Medicine Journal article have apologized to the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA-DOH) for errors in the county-level data that they relied on in suggesting that Pittsburgh (Allegheny County) is a “hot spot” county with a high proportion of nonmedical exemptions to vaccination and so may be especially susceptible to outbreaks. A letter this morning sent to the PA-DOH apologized to the department and state residents, and indicated that the researchers would inform appropriate media sources and have requested that the Journal corrections be issued to the article.

As noted previously, the data reported for Allegheny County on non-medical exemptions (religious and philosophical) to immunizations among kindergarteners, differed greatly from the data provided to the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA-DOH) and the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD). As a result of conversations between the Health Department and PA-DOH, the researchers were contacted by PA-DOH to discuss the discrepancies.

While the researchers reported 424 non-medical exemptions for Allegheny County kindergarteners in the school year 2015-16, the PA-DOH reported 212 (<http://bit.ly/2sY9eSN>) and ACHD reported 236 (the difference between the PA-DOH and ACHD is accounted for due to late reporting schools).

Over the last four years, the Health Department saw no significant increase in the rate of non-medical exemptions to vaccination in Allegheny County in kindergarteners.

Allegheny County Health Department Data

- [2014-15: 322](#) non-medical exemptions out of 13,305 enrolled kindergartners (2.4%)
- [2015-16: 236](#) non-medical exemptions out of 12,806 enrolled kindergartners (1.8%)
- [2016-17: 300](#) non-medical exemptions out of 12,704 enrolled kindergartners (2.4%)
- [2017-18: 267](#) non-medical exemptions out of 12,555 enrolled kindergartners (2.1%)

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