

# **World Health Organization: Controversy Over Vaccines**

**By Elaina Fickel**

With a loud boom, you can hear the delegate of Venezuela tell their fellow delegates about their harsh policies to protect against the spread of the diseases. One being a possible travel ban against individuals who aren't vaccinated to prevent the spread of disease internationally. This is just one example of the ideas proposed in today's moderated caucus discussing anti-vaxxers and people against antibiotics. Delegates proposed ideas that would benefit their countries and peoples as well as their allies. The main ideas of the conference were spreading education about vaccines and making vaccines affordable and available to all people in under-developed countries.

The divide between the less developed countries and more developed countries remained prevalent throughout the whole conference. The Philippines were a major advocate for less developed countries and pushed for consideration of people that don't have access to the internet or electricity. Vaccines are very important to the delegation of the Philippines because it continues to be a huge problem amongst Filipino youth, "In 2019, It was recorded that 60% of children in the Philippines aren't vaccinated... there should be an education and understanding of the topic," stated the delegate of the Philippines. Some countries like the U.S., U.K., and Finland previously proposed to use social media and other technological aids but didn't consider people that don't have social media or access to the internet. The delegate of India proposed a sort of trailer that would give people vaccines and to drive around to areas without internet access. This proposal was dismissed by the Philippines saying we need to educate more and not give random people substances they aren't educated about, essentially forcing it on them. This leads to the topic of trust between people and government and concerns of whether or not the vaccines they are given are the same quality as more developed countries. Looking at the divides of developed countries, we have to also look at the relationship between the people and the government.

Later in the debate, The U.S. brought up the root of Anti-Vaxxers and why people trust them over the government. Anti-Vaxxers stood behind a personal story told by a mom who truly believed that vaccines had caused her child to become autistic. Though she had no medical backing and was proven to be false, people might still trust her personal story over social media ads run by the government. Despite government distrust, many countries were in favor of advertising on social media. The delegation of the U.S. made multiple arguments to support social media ads saying to not underestimate their reach and that they're budget-friendly and are cheaper than researching vaccines. Mongolia brought up this point stating, "Media is a viable platform but how are we sure that people are believing what we are seeing on social media." Recognizing this, New Zealand had an alternative to social media ads that would consider

government transparency, which is using U.N. social media fact-checking to make sure false information is corrected.

As the conference was going into an unmoderated caucus, the delegates could openly gather into groups to discuss different solutions that they could agree on. The divide between developed and developing countries was still visible based on the different solutions between the groups. The complexity of this topic makes it difficult to find a solution, but with hope and comradery, we will be able to find a resolution the delegates can agree upon.