

## In the news

### IMMUNIZATION IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The World Health Organization (WHO) is recommending the inclusion of a rotavirus vaccine in childhood immunization programmes around the world. Rotavirus, which causes diarrhoea and vomiting, is responsible for more than 500,000 deaths per year, mostly in the developing world. The recommendation comes from the [WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts in Immunization](#), which reviewed data from clinical trials in South Africa and Malawi. The vaccine became available in Europe and the Americas just 3 years ago, so this might be the first vaccine to be introduced in the developing world after such a short period of time. "This WHO recommendation clears the way for vaccines that will protect children in the developing world from one of the most deadly diseases they face," said Tachi Yamada of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation ([BBC News](#), 5 Jun 2009).

But despite the proven protection afforded by vaccination against potentially deadly diseases, many children in the United Kingdom are not being immunized against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR), all of which are now on the increase, especially in Wales. As cases continue to be reported, officials are urging parents to vaccinate their children, who "can be left permanently brain damaged or can even die of measles." ([News Wales](#), 8 Jun 2009.)

Sandy Macara, a public health doctor, is lobbying the British Medical Association to include the MMR vaccine in a compulsory immunization programme that would be required for school entry, as other "attempts to persuade people have failed." ([theguardian.co.uk](#), 3 Jun 2009.) However, health visitors are opposed to this proposal. According to their union representative "Educating parents, not coercion, is the best way forward." ([Nursing Times](#), 3 Jun 2009.)

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