Hooray! Newsweek reports that Alison Singer, executive vice president of communications and awareness at Autism Speaks , has determined that the question of whether or not there is a link between childhood vaccines and autism has been answered. And that answer is no. Faced with disagreement from others in the organization, Ms. Singer chose to step down from her post. There are a few things to discuss here. Congratulations to Ms. Singer for looking at the evidence and coming to a conclusion. For those unware of the controversy, many parents of children with autism believe that childhood vaccines, specifically the MMR vaccine, is responsible for their child's condition. The theory is that mercury in the preservative Thimerasol , which used to be used in vaccines, caused brain damage in young children. Today, vaccines contain very little if any of this perservative, but there was never much evidence to implicate it anyway. It's possible that since autism is first noticeable at about the same time kids receive their vaccines, that parents assumed a causal link out of the correlation.

Many studies have been done to confirm this causality, but the overwhelming evidence is that vaccines are unrelated to autism.

So enter Ms. Singer, who has a child with autism. She joins a fledgling organization determined to do some good against this condition. She examines the evidence, and comes to the conclusion that autism research needs to move in a new direction. Her reward? She has to step down, because others in the organization want more money spent on research into vaccines and their relationship to autism. The anti-vaccination movement won't be swayed by facts or analysis. They're convinced vaccines are the cause, and won't consider any evidence to the contrary.

Parents concerned about autism refuse to vaccinate their kids, which puts them at risk for diseases that were once commonplace, but are now rarely seen.

Ms. Singer is doing the right thing. She is trying to devote scant resources to where they can do the most good. It's a shame that the community around her can't see where she's coming from, and it's a bigger shame that they're losing such an advocate. I hope Ms. Singer will continue the fight, and I have no doubt that she will.