

RFK Jr.'s anti-vaccine panel realizes it has no idea what it's doing, skips vote

He summed up the discussion succinctly: "The only thing that we're discussing here is if there's some benefit or removal of harm that comes from waiting a month. And I have not seen any data that says that there is any benefit to the infant of waiting a month, but there are a number of potential harms to the infant of waiting a month."

Panel member Robert Malone, who has falsely claimed that COVID-19 vaccines cause a form of AIDS, explained that the proposed change for the hep B vaccination was not due to any safety concern or evidence-based reason, but about trust among parents who have been exposed to vaccine misinformation.

"The signal that is prompting this is not one of safety, it is one of trust," Malone said yesterday. "It is one of parents uncomfortable with this medical procedure being performed at birth in a rather unilateral fashion without significant informed consent at a time in particular when there has been a loss of trust in the public health enterprise and vaccines in general."

Dashed decisions

But the questions and uncertainties of the proposed recommendation and the data behind it dogged the committee again this morning.

This morning, the voting language was put on a slide and immediately drew criticism. The language was:

If a mother tests [hepatitis B]-negative:

- *The first dose of the Hepatitis B vaccine is not given until the child is at least one month old.*
- *Infants may receive a dose of Hepatitis B vaccine before one month according to individual based decision-making. **

**Also referred to as shared clinical decision-making.*

Hibbeln, the psychiatrist, again pushed back, this time noting that the language of the change is confusing. “You can’t say don’t give it and then give an opportunity to give it,” he said, arguing that shared clinical decision-making is, essentially, all or nothing.

Discussion quickly spiraled, with another member questioning whether there was any data presented at all on the proposed recommendation. There was a fast motion to table the vote indefinitely, and the motion to table passed in a speedy vote of 11–1, with the ACIP chair, Martin Kulldorff, being the only holdout.

For the rest of the day, the panel is discussing COVID-19 vaccines. Stay tuned.

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