

Understanding Vaccine Hesitancy as a Neuro-evolutionary Problem

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Abstract: The scientific literature offers unequivocal data that demonstrate how vaccinations today are safe and effective and in the past were the medical intervention that, together with the sanitation of the water, saved more lives than any other medical intervention. Even if they improved life expectancy in advanced countries where herd immunity has been reached, today it is in the very same countries that social resistance to vaccination is putting children at risk of harm. A recent neurocognitive approach is offering an interesting frame to understand the causes and diffusion of anti-vaccine movements. Although novaxxers are heterogeneous social groups, they show some common traits. They are generally educated and affluent people, tending to later parenthood, sensitive to conspiracy theories, unwilling to confront with different ideas, favorable to alternative medicines, and scarce in assessing risk information. Some solutions will be discussed, including the theory of “nudge” and that of “bounded rationality” which have shown some efficacy by offering citizens the right tools to orient themselves in the architecture of health choices.

Keywords: Vaccine hesitancy, Science and society, Post-truth, Antiscientific movements.

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