

Anti-vax pack are a threat to the health of our children

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I'm glad I'm not taking any infants to the Curious Arts Festival on the edge of Ashdown Forest this coming weekend. Why so? I'm renting a weekend cottage for the event at nearby Forest Row, the hippie paradise of the Home Counties where a large proportion of parents are vehemently anti-vaccination.

A friend of mine used to live there but moved, saying she couldn't face one more argument where her neighbours ignored scientific fact. I mentioned this to another friend who works in public health for the area and she sighed and said, "Oh yes, there are outbreaks of measles in that area. We've given up thinking we can make them see sense, so we just advise parents how best to quarantine children and contain infection."

I find this intransigence extra-

maddening as I'm a bit of a hippie myself (barefoot tree-hugger? Tick. Acupuncture, falafels and folk music? Tick, tick, tick) and the cavalier attitude to herd immunity gives alternative culture a bad name. A terrifying 90,000 children are about to start school without having had the measles vaccine and Boris Johnson has called on social media firms to help counter the anti-vax bogus posts that are scaring parents. The PM could also promote wider reading of Agatha Christie's *The Mirror Crack'd From Side to Side*. The glamorous actress at the heart of the story, Marina Gregg – spoiler alert – is motivated to poison a gushing fan after she realises the woman was also introduced to her some years previously in Bermuda when she was pregnant with a miracle baby. The fan had German measles at the time, meaning the longed-for child was born with severe disabilities and the star had a nervous breakdown. I saw the 1980 film starring Liz Taylor at her most magnificently melodramatic and guessed whodunit due to the fact my class had all just had the triple measles-rubella-mumps vaccination.

I wouldn't advocate bumping off those who refuse to vaccinate their offspring – but that doesn't mean I don't feel borderline murderous.



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