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*Jordan K. Turgeon / MEDILL*

*A crowd gathered in Chicago's Grant Park to support vaccination choice May 26. Andrew Wakefield, whose now-retracted 1998 study is often attributed with the ongoing U.S. vaccine debate, delivered the keynote address. Wakefield lost his British medical license Monday after a panel decided his study was conducted unethically.*

## Vaccine debate heats up in Chicago, scorned doctor vows to continue research

**by JORDAN K. TURGEON**

**May 27, 2010**

Vaccination choice supporters gathered in Chicago's Grant Park Wednesday for the inaugural American Rally for Personal Rights. Just days after his British medical license was revoked after a panel decided his 1998 study linking the MMR vaccine and autism was conducted unethically, Andrew Wakefield told the crowd his research will continue.

"When the parents say, 'My child regressed after a vaccine,' we have an absolute moral and professional obligation as physicians to take that seriously -- not to pander to the whims of public health or the pharmaceutical industry, but to investigate them," Wakefield said.

The event was organized by Louise Kuo Habakus, director and co-founder of the Center for Personal Rights, a group that believes vaccination choice is a fundamental human right. Rally speakers called for more research so parents can make an informed decision whether or not to vaccinate their child.

Wakefield has been heavily scrutinized after his study was retracted from the Lancet medical journal in February following several years of investigation. The General Medical Council in Britain said Wakefield treated the children involved in the 1998 study with "callous disregard" for their health -- a phrase used by Wakefield for the title of his new book, released yesterday.

Since Wakefield's 1998 study, both the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health have rejected a causal relationship between autism and the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine. According to the NIH website, there is "no conclusive scientific evidence that any part of a vaccine or combination of vaccines causes autism."

Wakefield moved to Texas in 2004 and started an autism research center called Thoughtful House. He left the organization earlier this year.

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