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Dear Patient Families:

You may have been given this letter in response to an inquiry about our pediatric practice's approach to possible variations in the recommended schedule of immunizations for infants, children, and adolescents. We appreciate this opportunity to clarify our practice's united philosophy and practical approach, as we continue to practice pediatrics with our patients' health and well-being as our primary goal.

As pediatricians, we believe that vaccinating children and young adults may be the single most important life-saving and health-promoting intervention we can perform as health care professionals and that you can provide as parents/caregivers. Although we all must recognize and acknowledge that all treatments, including immunizations, may cause side-effects and may carry some risk, the proven benefits of the vaccines we offer far outweigh these existing risks. It is these very important principles of maximizing effectiveness and minimizing side-effects, developed over many years of scientific research and study, which give us the immunization schedules recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Our practice unanimously ascribes to these recommendations.

We are aware that, for parents, there are many sources of health information available to consult when making decisions for your children's health. We are also aware that some of these sources have raised concerns and anxiety about some side effects and risks of vaccines. Unfortunately, many of these concerns have little or no scientific research to support their theory; other concerns are remotely theoretical or miniscule when compared to the real risks of the existing diseases for which the immunizations are designed to prevent. Of particular concern to us is the relatively recent concept that separating multiple vaccines or components, or delaying vaccines, somehow reduces their risks. We know of **no credible scientific evidence** to support such a belief or practice. In fact, for the following reasons, we firmly believe that such **separated and delayed immunization schedules thwart our goal of quality pediatric care and are detrimental to the health of our patients:**

- Our practice's observation is that, in spite of their original intentions, the large majority of parents who undertake a non-recommended immunization schedule are **unable to maintain a series of timely extra visits** (separate from scheduled well-child visits) **necessary to have their children adequately and appropriately immunized for their age**. This resulting significant delay in immunizations has also been noted in studies evaluating immunization rates and goals.
- Any immunization that is delayed or postponed potentially leaves a child susceptible to infections that are a real risk to children in their age group. In general, the immunization schedules are designed to immunize children at the earliest possible safe and effective age, in order to protect against threats at that age. **A decision to delay, separate, or defer a vaccine is a decision to leave a child at risk for serious illness.**
- We also believe that many extra visits, consisting of only immunizations, **increase the number of episodes of pain and discomfort associated with the injections** for your child, making complete immunization a more unpleasant experience. Additionally, there are **unnecessary time and cost resources** for parents and insurance companies associated with such extra visits. Moreover, deviation from recommended schedules can increase the risk for medical error.

By policy, in consideration of all of these factors and wishing to act to protect your child's well-being, **our practice will not support or administer vaccine schedules which are planned to vary from the AAP and CDC recommended schedules,**



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when no individual contraindication to standard immunization exists. As pediatricians whose primary goal is to preserve the health of our patients, we will use our best efforts and resources to care for our patients. We believe that most of our patients' families recognize this commitment through their years of association with our practice.

Please be assured that we always recognize the important role and autonomy of parents in making medical care decisions for their children. We remain committed to full education and discussion regarding immunization decisions. **Also, be assured that any individual patient medical conditions, situations, and contraindications will be considered in mutually planning immunizations for our patients.**

Finally, for families who ultimately absolutely refuse to vaccinate their children despite all of our efforts, we will ask that they seek another health care provider who shares their views. In this rare situation, we feel that if our views on the risks and benefits of vaccination are so divergent from that of such a family, then our views on many aspects of pediatric care would likely be incongruent with the ongoing care for their children.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter. As medical professionals, we feel very strongly that vaccinating children on schedule with currently available vaccines is absolutely the right thing to do for all children and young adults.

Sincerely,

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