

RFK Jr. Has Considered Denmark as Model for Cutting Childhood Vaccines

BY LIZ ESSLEY WHYTE

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has considered altering the U.S. vaccine schedule to be more closely aligned with Denmark's, people familiar with the matter said, but no final decision has been made.

If the U.S. were to match Denmark's selections, it would mean fewer recommended vaccines for American children. The U.S. recommends youngsters to get immunized against 18 diseases, while Denmark recommends 10. Vaccines not recommended for all children in Denmark include those for chickenpox, rotavirus, meningococcal and hepatitis A.

Health officials are still weighing the evidence for the possible changes, people familiar with the matter said.

"Unless you hear it from HHS directly, this is pure speculation," Department of Health and Human Services spokesman Andrew Nixon said.

Kennedy has worked this year to overhaul the federal government's approach to vaccines. He has dropped recommendations for Covid-19 vaccines for children and pregnant women, ousted all the previous members of an important vaccine recommendation committee and rewritten a government website to say that vaccines might cause autism. He has said his goal is to give Americans gold-standard science about vaccines, though many scientists have criticized the changes.

Kennedy and his top lieutenants were set to announce the Denmark alignment in an event Friday afternoon at the HHS headquarters in Washington, D.C., people familiar with the matter said. But the release was postponed until the new year because it conflicted with an event at the



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White House, Nixon said.

A top Food and Drug Administration official who recently gave a public presentation on Denmark's vaccine schedule was set to attend the event Friday. Dr. Tracy Beth Hoeg, the acting director of FDA's drugs division, told the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention earlier this month that the Danish

schedule of vaccines might increase trust in public health measures by focusing on the "core" childhood vaccines. Hoeg suggested that high-risk groups could still be encouraged to receive

certain vaccines that the general population wouldn't be recommended to receive.

"One of the reasons Denmark may do a better job at making their vaccine recommendations is it's not a politicized discussion," she said. "They have a culture of debate."

CNN reported that Kennedy's department was planning to align the schedule with Denmark's.

President Trump called the U.S. childhood vaccination schedule "ridiculous" in a

Truth Social post earlier this month and urged Kennedy to "fast track" an evaluation of other countries' schedules and "better align" the U.S. recommendations.

Public-health experts criticized the idea of the U.S. aligning with Denmark, saying different countries have different vaccination needs and priorities.

"Why in the world would we outsource the job of protecting children, to Denmark or any other country?" said Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, a Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health professor.

Denmark is a much smaller country than the U.S. and has a nationalized healthcare system, so the set of vaccines the country recommends and pays for doesn't necessarily make sense for the U.S., some doctors have said. For example, different subgroups of meningococcal meningitis dominate in Europe than in the U.S., Sharfstein said.

"We don't follow Denmark's vaccine recommendations because we don't live in Denmark. Children in the United States are at risk of different diseases than children in other countries," said Dr. Jose Romero, a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on Infectious Diseases, in a statement published earlier this month.

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