Dr. Kirstin Hendrickson presents a NEW science lecture in OLLI at ASU!

Anti-Vax: The Safety and Efficacy of Vaccines, and a Hard Look at the Modern Anti-Vaccine Movement

Tuesday, April 14
1:00 to 2:30 p.m.
ASU West campus, 4701 W. Thunderbird Rd, Glendale, AZ 85306

Lecture: Vaccination is arguably one of the safest and most effective health measures in modern medicine, having eradicated the scourge of smallpox and rendered such potentially debilitating illnesses as polio and tetanus nearly unheard of in the US. The vaccine, however, is a victim of its own success: as vaccine-preventable illnesses disappear from the public eye and a new generation of parents begins to make health choices for their children never having seen the effects of these potential killers, nebulous fears about “toxins” in vaccines loom larger than the seeming unlikelihood of a child succumbing to a now-rare illness. Having gained momentum for more than a decade, the latest iteration of the anti-vaccine movement is resulting in increasing rates of once-rare disease in the US: pertussis cases are on the rise, and a recent measles outbreak that started at Disneyland affected numerous states and several countries.

The modern anti-vaccine movement is by no means the first of its kind; people have feared and revered vaccines in cycles since the development of the modern inoculation by Edward Jenner. What leads to these fears? What’s behind the modern anti-vaccine movement, and is there more to it than simply a desire for the “natural” and a fear of injecting “toxins”? What is a vaccine, anyway, and are the ingredients anything to worry about? Finally, is the decision to vaccinate a personal one, or does it have an impact on public health? In this class, Dr. Kirstin Hendrickson will address the safety and efficacy of modern vaccines, the inception of the modern anti-vaccine movement, and its impact on individual, national, and global health.

Instructor: Kirstin Hendrickson earned her Ph.D. in organic chemistry at Arizona State University and is a senior lecturer in the department of chemistry and biochemistry at ASU. She is the author of the science textbook Chemistry in the Real World, she writes articles about science for popular media sources like Scientific American, and she blogs about evidence-based decision making. Dr. Hendrickson focuses on courses that address applications of chemistry in daily life, and the reciprocity between science and society. Her principal passion as a chemistry instructor is to help students of all ages to see, appreciate, and become conversant with the chemical processes that surround us every day.

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