

Vaccines Win Again

Few medical scare campaigns have done as much harm as the one claiming to link autism to vaccines for children. So parents and doctors alike should welcome the latest emphatic ruling by a special Washington court dismissing such allegations.

On Friday, special masters in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims ruled against the claims of parents of autistic children in three separate cases. The parents alleged that vaccines with thimerosal—a preservative containing mercury—had triggered autism in their children, and they were seeking compensation from the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program. The vaccine court was established to re-

quire a lower standard of proof than civil courts, so the forceful rejection of the vaccine-autism link is especially notable.

Special Master George Hastings wrote, for example, that “The overall weight of the evidence is overwhelming contrary to the petitioners’ causation theories.” Another ruling noted that many parents had “relied upon practitioners and researchers who peddled hope, not opinions grounded in science and medicine.” The court also rejected claims that certain children are genetically predisposed to be more susceptible to mercury.

The rulings follow the same court’s

judgment last year against claims that measles-mumps-rubella shots in combina-

tion with other thimerosal-containing vaccines cause autism. And they reinforce many comprehensive scientific studies, including one from the Institute of Medicine, that have ruled out any causal link.

Autism is a frightening diagnosis that puts enormous burdens on families, but blaming vaccines without evidence only harms other families who might be frightened enough not to immunize their children. The fate of children with autism would be far better served if the activists who have devoted their resources to lawsuits would support research to discover its true causes, and to helping those children realize their full human potential.

