



The Antivaccine Heresy: Jacobson v. Massachusetts and the Troubled History of Compulsory Vaccination in the United States (Rochester Studies in Medical History)

By Karen L. Walloch

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Most people today celebrate vaccination as a great achievement, yet many nineteenth-century Americans opposed it, so much in fact that states had to make vaccination compulsory. In response, antivaccination societies formed all over the United States, lobbying state legislatures and bringing lawsuits to abolish these laws. One such lawsuit ultimately arrived at the United States Supreme Court, which upheld the laws in a landmark decision, *Jacobson v. Massachusetts* (1905). In this study, Karen Walloch examines the history of vaccine development in the United States, the laws put in place enjoining the practice, and the popular reaction against them. Walloch finds that at the end of the nineteenth century Americans had good reason to fear vaccination. Vaccines simply did not live up to claims made for their safety and effectiveness. They induced pain, disability, and grim or even fatal infections. In this critical history of the antivaccine movement and of *Jacobson v. Massachusetts* in particular, Walloch locates the beginnings of a legacy of doubt about vaccination -- one that affected legislation in all fifty states and is still very much alive today.

Karen Walloch is a historian who teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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Editorial Review

Review

One of the best history books ever written about American vaccination politics and policies, *The Antivaccine Heresy* will have a significant audience among medical historians, scholars of public health, and citizens concerned about similar issues today. Walloch's research is stunningly thorough; her interpretations challenging, insightful, and compelling; and her stories are fascinating. This work is truly pioneering and may well change not only the way history books are written but also the way that vaccinologists write about the smallpox vaccine. -- Robert Johnston, editor of *The Politics of Healing*

The book is a notable contribution to the history of public health in America and the history of science at large. Its most distinctive feature is Walloch's in-depth assessment of the antivaccinationists, who for so long had been noted only in passing by historians of medicine. *PULSE* One of the best history books ever written about American vaccination politics and policies, *The Antivaccine Heresy* will have a significant audience among medical historians, scholars of public health, and citizens concerned about similar issues today. Walloch's research is stunningly thorough; her interpretations challenging, insightful, and compelling; and her stories are fascinating. This work is truly pioneering and may well change not only the way history books are written but also the way that vaccinologists write about the smallpox vaccine. -- Robert Johnston, editor of *The Politics of Healing*

The Antivaccine Heresy stands out among the handful of other books on the history of vaccination in the United States in its comprehensive treatment of the subject, its coverage of the topic prior to 1900 and at the turn of the twentieth century, and in the number and variety of resources it draws upon. It is a major accomplishment and a valuable, highly important contribution to the history of medicine and public health... *H-DISABILITY (H-NET REVIEWS)* The book is a notable contribution to the history of public health in America and the history of science at large. Its most distinctive feature is Walloch's in-depth assessment of the antivaccinationists, who for so long had been noted only in passing by historians of medicine. *PULSE* One of the best history books ever written about American vaccination politics and policies, *The Antivaccine Heresy* will have a significant audience among medical historians, scholars of public health, and citizens concerned about similar issues today. Walloch's research is stunningly thorough; her interpretations challenging, insightful, and compelling; and her stories are fascinating. This work is truly pioneering and may well change not only the way history books are written but also the way that vaccinologists write about the smallpox vaccine. -- Robert Johnston, editor of *The Politics of Healing*

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About the Author

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