



## NEWS

# Facebook ad claiming that vaccines can kill is banned by UK regulator

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The UK's Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has ruled that a Facebook advertisement paid for by a US based antivaccination campaign group, which featured a picture of a baby with his eyes closed should not appear again.

The ad, posted for Stop Mandatory Vaccination, founded by Larry Cook, a Los Angeles based author and "natural living" advocate, stated, "Parents, not only can any vaccine given at any age kill your child, but if this unthinkable tragedy does occur, doctors will dismiss it as 'sudden infant death syndrome' (SIDS). If you are on the fence about vaccinating, read this story and then join our Facebook group to talk with like minded parents."

The ad featured a small baby with his eyes closed and text stating, "Owen Matthew Stokes (Aug 18, 2017-Oct 25, 2017). 2-month-old Dies 48 hours after 8 vaccines. Owen's Mom speaks out."

The mother of a young baby complained to the ASA that the claim about the risk of vaccines was misleading and could not be substantiated, and that the image of the baby was likely to cause distress. The authority upheld the claim on both grounds and told Cook that the ad must not be run again in its current form.

Before upholding the complaint, the authority asked Cook to produce evidence that all vaccines carry the risk of death for children. He sent a US federal government document showing the number of compensation claims and the amounts of compensation awarded under the US's national vaccine

compensation programme. This showed that between 1988 and 2018 a total of 6122 compensation claims for vaccine injury and death were allowed, and 11 214 claims were dismissed.

The ASA said, "While we acknowledged that those figures showed that a large number of claims had been compensated in relation to alleged injury or death caused by vaccination, we noted that the report stated that settlement was not an admission of liability and did not determine whether the vaccine had conclusively caused the injury or death."

The authority added that the data in the UK could be different and concluded, "We considered that the evidence did not demonstrate that all vaccinations were capable of causing death to children."

The image of the baby and reference to SIDS, said the ASA, "were likely to cause fear or distress to readers, particularly parents who may be looking for factual information about the risks associated with vaccinations for children." Because of the lack of evidence, the ad was "likely to cause fear without justifiable reason."

Cook posted after the ruling, "After many weeks of investigation, [the ASA] determined I violated their advertising policies and demanded I not run similar ads in the future and sign documentation agreeing to such. I refused. I will not sign any such documents agreeing to their terms and I will continue to promote my messaging to the parents of the United Kingdom." He added, "The ASA does not have jurisdiction over Facebook or me."