

Measles cases intensifies vaccination debate

By Adam Nagourney and Abby Goodnough, New York Times

LOS ANGELES – A measles outbreak that began at Disneyland is spreading across California and beyond, prompting health officials to move aggressively to contain it – including by barring unvaccinated students from going to school in Orange County. The outbreak has increased concerns that a longstanding movement against childhood vaccinations has created a surge in a disease that was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000.

Health officials said 59 cases of measles had been diagnosed in California as of Wednesday, with an additional eight related cases spread through Utah, Washington, Oregon, Colorado and Mexico. Among those infected are five workers at Disneyland, where the outbreak was spotted in mid-December; 42 of the 59 California cases have been linked to the Disneyland outbreak.

The cases were a continuation of what health officials said was a worrisome increase in measles in Orange County and other places where parents had resisted the urging of health professionals to inoculate their children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 644 cases of measles from 27 states last year, by far the largest number since 2000.

Before measles vaccines became commonplace in 1963, about three million to four million Americans a year contracted the disease, the agency said, and 400 to 500 died from it.

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