



Walter Mencken's

SD ON THE QT

Almost factual news

Whoop(s)ing Cough!



Those are snakes, after all.

Whooping Cough Outbreak Tied to County Health Snafu: Patients Injected with Live Disease Culture

"Be careful what you ask for."

INSIDE A GIANT PLASTIC BUBBLE, COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT — There has been considerable debate in recent years over the safety, efficacy, and necessity of vaccination for certain diseases. Actress Jenny McCarthy famously blamed the MMR vaccine for her son's autism. But this year, when California saw the return of pertussis, or whooping cough, it seemed that the vaccine advocates had been right all along. So much needless suffering — all of it preventable through vaccination.

Then, earlier this month, KPBS broke the story that nearly two out of three of those diagnosed with whooping cough in San Diego County this

year were up to date with their immunizations. Following the report, the San Diego County Health Department launched its own internal investigation into the matter.

"SD on the QT" has obtained a copy of the investigation's findings, and according to the report, it's not vaccines you can't trust, it's government employees. In every case of whooping cough in a "fully immunized" patient, it turned out that patient had been injected not with the vaccine, but with full-strength, active pertussis culture. Investigations into how such a monstrous mixup could have taken place led to one county employee, who, as of press time, remains unnamed pending an

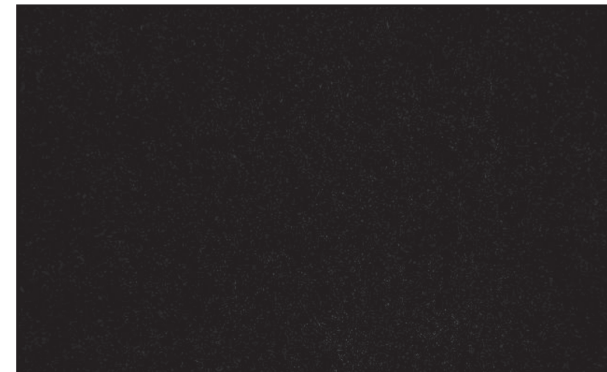
internal hearing. According to the report, the employee responded to patient requests for "the whooping cough shot" rather too literally — *actually going and obtaining whooping-cough cultures and substituting them for the vaccine.*

In an interview, San Diego County deputy public health officer Dean Sidelinger apologized for the department's role in contributing to the worst whooping-cough epidemic California has faced in the past 50 years. But he was quick to note that the unnamed employee had done his best to comply with patient demand. "In each instance, the patient asked for a whooping-cough shot and was given just what he or she asked

for. Though the result was unfortunate, and in some cases, tragic," said Sidelinger, "this is a clear case of government sensitivity to the particular healthcare requests of individual patients. If anything, it should be seen as a sign of good things to come as government works to implement the healthcare reforms that are so desperately needed in our county, our state, and our nation."

Sidelinger then added that he had recently accepted a position as chief medical officer on the Caribbean island of San Juan, effective immediately. Before ending the interview, he reminded "SD on the QT" that the County still had plenty of swine-flu vaccine on hand, "just in case it comes back. Don't wait — vaccinate!"

Victory!



Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers throwing a touchdown pass. Or a clown riding a tiny bicycle. It's kind of hard to tell.

Chargers Bounce Back from Week One Loss to Chiefs, Stomp Jaguars 38-13 for Season's First Win.

Let a Billion Algae Bloom?



Your new filling station?

Synthetic Genomics' Craig Venter proposes using neglected backyard pools as personal biofuel production facilities. Says home-based "algae micro refineries" will herald the dawn of the biodiesel era, "and besides, you haven't really used the pool since the kids moved out, anyway." Plan is opposed by County Department of Environmental Health director Jack Miller, who warns of massive mosquito breeding in stagnant waters, followed by outbreaks of mosquito-driven diseases such as West Nile virus. "It's not like we have a vaccine for this one," warns Miller.

WHO PLAYS WHO

SAN DIEGO HEALTH & SCIENCE EDITION



On *Roseanne*, **Martin Mull** tried to extract labor from Roseanne Barr.



Genome scientist **Craig Venter** wants to extract gas from pond scum.



Jason Lee will always have trouble explaining his participation in *Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel*.



Deputy public health officer **Dr. Dean Sidelinger** is having trouble explaining why immunized people are still getting whooping cough.



On *The Sopranos*, **Vincent Pastore's** spirit spoke from beyond the grave through a fish.



Health and Human Services Agency director **Nick Macchione** wants to address citizens' spiritual health, and probably thinks they should eat more fish.