

A recent paper showed that bibliographical references given by the pharmaceutical industry to support their promotional claims are often inaccurate (1). However, these abuses are not limited to drug advertisements and the study by Galil et al (Dec 12, 1909-15) is a worrying case in point. After reporting data showing poor protection after vaccination against varicella, the authors gave 3 references to maintain that, in spite of these unexpected results, immunisation has reduced the incidence of varicella "dramatically". Yet, none of these references supports this assertion: one concerned trends before vaccine licensure (2), another was a simple poster with a noncomparative report of hospitalisations rates (3), the third was a follow-up of antibody persistence in less than 300 children without control group (4). A few months ago, Wolfe and Sharp reported on the "remarkable" anachronism of the arguments of anti-vaccination groups (5): this is certainly true, but there are a number of data indicating that the pro-vaccinationists' arguments also are often below the level of reliability normally required in modern clinical research.

1. Villanueva P, Peiró S, Librero J, Pereiró I. Accuracy of pharmaceutical advertisements in medical journal. *Lancet* 2003; 361: 27-32
2. Meyer PA, Seward JF, Jumaan A et al. Varicella mortality : trends before vaccine licensure in the United States, 1970-1994. *J Infect Dis* 2000; 182: 383-90
3. Galil K, Lin F, Seward J. Hospitalizations for varicella in the United States, 1988 to 1995. *Am J Epidemiol* 1994; 139: 77-90
4. Johnson CE, Stancin T, Fattlar D et al. A long-term prospective study of varicella vaccine in healthy children. *Pediatrics* 1997; 100: 761-6
5. Wolfe RM, Sharp LK. Anti-vaccinationists past and present. *Br Med J* 2002; 325: 430-2