Both Sides of the Vaccination Debate are Correct… and Incorrect

It seems to me that the vaccination debate has devolved into a cynical competition to see just how extreme each side can get.

On one side, we're apparently just supposed to implicitly trust everything a doctor or the "medical community" says without the slightest degree of skepticism. No discussion of the financial incentives involved, the political connections within the pharmaceutical industry, or the risks associated with any particular vaccine will be tolerated.

On the other side, the only acceptable position seems to be complete abstinence from all vaccines in all situations. Suggest that a particular vaccine might be worthwhile, and you're accused of being a "shill for the pharmaceutical industry." (Sadly, such a lucrative position continues to elude me.)

As is typical for me, I don't fit in either popular camp. I believe that vaccines can be useful. Smallpox and Polio were significant problems which were largely solved through vaccination. I also think that kids today are getting too many vaccines at too young of an age. Like almost all human actions, vaccinations carry both risks and rewards ("Heresy!" cries everyone) and the unique risk tolerance of each person will lead to a variety of conclusions—none of which are inherently or objectively wrong.

If both sides would strive to acknowledge the respective risks or rewards recognized by the other side, this acrimonious vaccination debate might be elevated to an enlightening discussion from which we all could benefit. I can't say I'm terribly optimistic about this outcome, though, as it doesn't seem to be anyone's primary objective right now.