

Open Letter on Fluoridation

I have been a dentist for almost 25 years. Upon my graduation from dental school, I, like most of my colleagues, was an avid supporter of water fluoridation. I supported fluoridation because organizations like the American Dental Association endorsed it as a "safe and effective" means of preventing tooth decay in children. I assumed that they had commissioned studies to offer proof of this claim. To my surprise, this turned out to be a totally erroneous assumption on my part.

It has been approximately 10 years since the city of Tacoma began to fluoridate its water. I have examined children and adults drinking this water during that time. What I have seen has made me question the use of fluoride. I have noticed no discernible decrease in decay in children or adults. My practice has not noticed a decrease in the number of fillings that I am placing because of decay. But what I have noticed is that there has been an increase in fluorosis in children, white or brown spots on the teeth indicating that children are being overdosed with fluoride. These fluorosed teeth were actually more susceptible to decay. This prompted me to begin studying the issue. What I found was very little scientific literature supporting that fluoride decreases tooth decay, let alone research that proved it was safe. On the other hand, I found a great deal of scientific literature that raised some red flags in my mind regarding its safety.

While most dentists are proponents of water fluoridation, there are many dentists and physicians who do not support water fluoridation. The majority of naturopathic physicians and chiropractors do not support water fluoridation. The dentists that do support water fluoridation do so based on information they have received from local and national dental organizations such as the Washington State Dental Association and the American Dental Association. These dentists are unaware of the controversy surrounding the issue because the ADA says there is no controversy. These dentists are unaware of the opposing scientific views because the ADA says it is all "junk science". These dentists are also unaware that the chemical put in drinking water is not sodium fluoride but hydrofluorosilicic acid, a toxic waste by-product of the phosphate fertilizer industry. Pure reagent grade sodium fluoride is no longer used because it is too expensive.

Since the Supreme Court ruled in favor of water municipalities, saying that a Pierce County Health Department mandate to force fluoridation was not legal, the issue will now be brought before City Councils and voters in Pierce County. The Pierce County Health Department wants fluoride in the water of all Pierce County residents, and their attempts to do so are relentless, if not a bit unscrupulous. Before you cast a vote in favor of fluoridation, I hope you will take the time to educate yourself on the issue. What you find may surprise you. An excellent article by Dr. Paul Connett entitled "50 Reasons to Oppose Fluoridation" can be accessed at www.fluoridealert.com. Dr. Connett is a professor of chemistry at St. Lawrence University in New York. He gives scientific references for every reason. It was recently updated so the information is current. It is concise and will provide the reader with a brief but thorough synopsis of the literature that exists in opposition to fluoridation. It will also demonstrate that there are many credible scientists and researchers that disagree with fluoridation because evidence of its safety is lacking. They are not some fringe group of lunatics claiming it to be a communist plot as Dr. Cruz-Uribe, the director of the Pierce County Health Department, would have you believe. However, defending fluoridation as a "safe and effective" means of controlling tooth decay does provide a convenient cover for the many industries that stand to profit from the public being misinformed about the dangers of fluoride pollutants.

Whether you are a city council member or just a citizen of Pierce County, it would be prudent to consider the following points before making a decision to support water fluoridation:

1. The fact that any city council is even considering voting on this issue may be illegal. The State Supreme Court has ruled that government authorities do not have the jurisdiction to tell water municipalities to fluoridate their water supplies.
2. Water municipalities do not have the right to add medications to their customers' water without their consent. Informed Consent is now the standard of care in every medical and dental office. Lack of informed consent is one of the main reasons medical/dental practitioners are subject to litigation.

3. The fluoride debate is in actuality a moot point. In the Amicus Briefs documenting the recent State Supreme Court ruling, only sodium fluoride was mentioned. When dentists speak of water fluoridation they are talking about sodium fluoride. However, the chemical used in water fluoridation is hydrofluorosilicic acid. This chemical is not a pharmaceutical product. It is not even reagent grade, so it is full of impurities such as lead, arsenic and mercury. It has never been tested for safety. There is not one scientific article showing that fluorosilicic acid is "safe and effective". So theoretically there is no debate. The population is being lied to about the nature of the chemical that would be put in their water. They are also being given what would be classified as an experimental chemical without their consent, which is a violation of the Nuremberg Code. I believe the contract some of the municipalities have signed with the Washington Dental Service Foundation and other agencies donating money for fluoridation equipment contains a "hold harmless clause". If this substance is so safe, why the need for a "hold harmless clause". And if they aren't responsible for any future damages to citizens for using this chemical, then who would be???
4. It is illogical to fluoridate the rest of Pierce County based on the fact that Tacoma, University Place, Fircrest and Fort Lewis have been fluoridated for years with "no discernible harm" to the residents of these cities. This is the ridiculous reasoning Tacoma's pro-fluoride newspaper, The News Tribune uses in their support of fluoridation. "No discernible harm" is not proof of lack of harm. Logic would dictate that studies be done in these cities to see if there is discernible benefit to the residents of the cities receiving fluoride. To this date, no one has presented any scientific data showing decay rates have declined in Tacoma since fluoridation began almost 10 years ago. If there is no discernible benefit, then fluoride should not be added to the water.
5. The addition of fluoride to water violates modern pharmacological principles and medical ethics. There is no accounting for individual physiological responses to this chemical, differences in body size (children receive the same amount as adults) and the fact that water consumption varies from person to person. There is no way to monitor fluoride intake from other sources. For instance the cereal, Wheaties, contains a significant amount of fluoride. Teflon contains fluoride, which can transfer to food during the cooking process. Many medications such as Prozac and the antibiotic, Cipro, contain fluoride. Some workers are exposed to large amounts of fluoride in their workplace environment. Fluoride used in pesticides can accumulate in fruits and vegetables. Soft drinks and other foods processed using fluoridated water have high fluoride contents. There is no way currently to assess the interaction of hydrofluorosilicic with other chemicals to which the population is exposed. An individual's exposure to fluoride when taking all of the above factors into account can reach 10 mg. per day, well above the level of intake that is considered safe.
6. Proponents of fluoridation will tell you there are "thousands of studies" showing fluoridation is safe and effective. Let's just say there are 1000 studies confirming fluoridation's safety. Fluoridation has been around for about 50 years. That would mean that there are at least 20 studies per year being published that show water fluoridation is "safe and effective", or 200 studies in the last 10 years. Dr. Connett gives 50 valid reasons not to fluoridate. It would be fair to ask the proponents of fluoridation for a list of at least 50 studies which demonstrate fluoride's safety. After all, they say there are "thousands" out there. It should be easy to come up with just 50.
7. In a July 2004 editorial in the WSDA newsletter, a local dentist comments about materials used in dentistry. The first line of the editorial states "Healthcare products that are intended for use in the human body must be tested as thoroughly as possible prior to their introduction into the marketplace". She goes on to say at the end of the article "I think scientifically conducted, randomized controlled trials are essential elements that will help ensure that products are safe and effective...If there is no documentation that supports use of the product, then use the test of time: wait. Wait until research is done and supports the product." This is an excellent example of how those entrenched in organized dentistry can talk out of both sides of their mouth. This same dentist advocates using an untested hazardous chemical in everyone's water, but cannot offer any scientific proof that it is safe and effective. It would certainly be prudent for the Pierce County Health Department to follow the advice printed in the editorial. Until studies are done that prove fluoridation in Tacoma has been effective, there should be a moratorium on the addition of fluoride to any other water supplies in Pierce County.

8. Indeed, the subject of tooth decay in poor children in Pierce County is an embarrassing one for the dental profession. But, instead of dealing with the real issues, dentists and our public health officials prefer to pour fluoride in the water. They pat themselves on the back and pretend they are doing something for poor children. At the same time, they have totally failed to fight the huge over-the-counter consumption of sugar containing foods by young children to the point of allowing the introduction of soda pop and candy machines into our public schools. Dentists make no attempt to educate poor families on the value of good nutrition. Over 80% of the dentists do not accept medical coupons, so the poor have almost no access to dental care. This is due to the fact that the State of Washington has an oppressive system for dentists that accept medical coupons and reimbursement for services is minimal. Paradoxically, it is the poor children that suffer the most from the adverse consequences of water fluoridation. And if you look at inner city children across our nation that have had fluoridation since birth, you will find there is absolutely no difference in their decay rate when compared with children in non-fluoridated cities. Poor children get more decay than children in higher income families. Lack of proper nutrition is the number one reason children get tooth decay, not lack of fluoride.

I am one of the few dentists in my profession that will speak out, although there are many like me who disagree with fluoridation. Do not be fooled by unscientific polls taken by the Pierce County Dental Society. In a March 2004 editorial published in The News Tribune, the local dental society claimed that 96% of member dentists polled supported water fluoridation. What they did not tell you is that only 156 out of almost 400 members responded to the poll. That is less than 40%. That 40% of dentists is less than 0.02 % of the 700,000+ population of Pierce County. This is hardly a majority of the residents of Pierce County. There is absolutely no reason they should be dictating what is put in your drinking water.

The current promoters of 50 years of fluoridation promote it on the basis of a faith more akin to religion than science. When asked to debate the issue in public, they steadfastly refuse because their position is indefensible from a scientific standpoint. Government officials have put so much of their credibility on the line in support of fluoridation, that it will be very difficult for them to do an about face and speak honestly and openly about this issue. It will be difficult for the dentals associations such as the ADA to admit there are health risks because of the liability issues. But the status quo can be changed. The medical profession did this after promoting hormone replacement therapy for almost thirty years.

Those of you who are interested in learning more about the possible adverse effects of water fluoridation can log onto www.fluoridealert.org and www.slweb.org.

The Fluoride Deception by Christopher Bryson is a recently released book documenting the collusion between industry, dental organizations and public health officials. It also contains 200 pages of source notes. It is available on www.amazon.com.

It is my hope today that you will take a sincere interest in this critical health issue. Please take time to educate yourselves on the facts, and not just listen to what public health officials say. My hope for the future is to have it removed from the water of those areas of Pierce County that are already fluoridated. It is time to stop the folly of fluoridation and the damaging effects it has on our citizens.

Sincerely,
Debra Hopkins, DDS