



Unlicensed drug used for babies condemned by health NGOs

Five non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Alliance for Natural Health, the Dr Rath Health Foundation, the National Health Federation, VOICE and MayDay, have formed a new alliance to challenge national and international regulations and guidelines that continue to allow the use of synthetic fluorides in infant formulas. After decades of use in drinking water in certain parts of the world, such as USA, Canada, Ireland, UK, Australia and New Zealand, fluoride's risk to health is demonstrated by a growing body of scientific evidence, including increased risk of cancer, osteoporosis, bone fractures and dental fluorosis (mottling of the teeth), that may outweigh its purported benefit: the reduced incidence of dental caries. This concern has been most recently voiced by the American Dental Association (ADA), which issued interim guidance on 9th November 2006, advising parents to mix powdered infant formula with fluoride-free water.

Fluoride represents a range of compounds that occur naturally in both spring and river waters, and a group of synthetic compounds, which are by-products of industrial wastes. These latter compounds are then added to water supplies for the purpose of killing bacteria implicated in tooth decay.

Dr Robert Verkerk, Executive Director of the Alliance for Natural Health, said: *"Fluorides are extremely reactive molecules which have been shown to cause considerable harm in biological systems. They continue to be used by health authorities for a specific medicinal purpose, namely the treatment and prevention of dental caries, yet they have never been subjected to the full risk/benefit analysis which is required in order to bring other drugs to the market. Drinking water medicated with fluoride clearly amounts to government-sponsored use of an unlicensed drug. It is staggering that international bodies such as the United Nations' Codex Alimentarius Commission could have overruled the substantial scientific concerns about fluoride in infant formula raised by several countries in November's Codex meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand and that babies, the most vulnerable members of our society, are made the innocent victims."*

Paul Anthony Taylor, on behalf of the Dr Rath Health Foundation, added: *"It is deeply irresponsible of governments to force all sectors of society to consume fluoride along with our single most required form of sustenance - water, especially when the toxic dose overlaps the therapeutic dose meaning there is no safety margin. The recent meeting of the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses in Chiang Mai, exemplified the irrational and inconsistent behaviour of regulators in relation to fluoride. On the basis of consensus voting procedures, the same committee, in the same meeting, voted to prevent fluoride from being added to powdered formulas during their manufacture, while allowing the same contaminant to be added to water used in the manufacture of ready-to-use formulas. It is deeply irresponsible of governments to force all sectors of society to consume fluoride along with our single most required form of sustenance - water, especially when the toxic dose overlaps the therapeutic dose meaning there is no safety margin."*

Long time anti-fluoridation campaigner, Robert Pocock of VOICE in Ireland, has welcomed the united front being developed against ingested fluoride. *"VOICE has been waging a long battle against the Irish government's fluoridation of drinking water",* says Pocock, *"given the high toxicity of synthetic fluorides and their uncontrolled dosage, there are undeniable risks to the human body and there is no safety margin between the amounts required to yield a therapeutic effect and the amounts that are universally safe. Since babies are among the most susceptible groups exposed, it is deeply irresponsible for any regulator to continue allowing this*

unlicensed drug to be used for babies, especially when no specific scientific studies have been undertaken to demonstrate its safety. Worse still is that increasing numbers of cell, animal and human studies reveal significant risks to adults and children, risks that have now been raised by prestigious bodies such as the American Dental Association. ”

“Putting this into perspective”, added Verkerk, “the UN World Health Organization has set for fluoride a maximum guideline level of 1.5 mg per litre in drinking water without making any reference to consumption by infants. Looking more closely at the guidelines most recently agreed by another UN body, Codex, the situation is preposterous. We have calculated that, in physiological terms, the Codex guideline level for babies allows a baby to potentially be exposed to the equivalent amount of fluoride to which an adult would be exposed when drinking 16 litres of fluoridated water.”

The US-based National Health Federation (NHF) has strongly opposed since the 1950s the fluoridation of public water supplies, and has long fought against the contradictory consensus views at Codex meetings. Scott Tips, NHF’s Legal Counsel, said: *“This disproportionate behaviour at Codex must be stopped and we welcome the support of other high-profile NGOs in this important struggle in which the most vulnerable sector of our society - babies - are the innocent victims. Even the Canadian Dental Association has stated that ‘Fluoride supplements should not be recommended for children less than three years old.’ This demonstrates a most definite awareness that fluoride is not the innocuous substance that it is passed off as being, particularly where the forms used (hydrofluosilicic acid, sodium silicofluoride, and sodium fluoride) are nothing more than the by-products of commercial fertilizer or aluminium production. In fact, while many governments struggle with the fluoride issue, increasing amounts of scientific evidence contraindicate the use of fluoride in the public water supply.”*

Also adding its voice to this campaign, the Danish civil health rights organization, MayDay has been publicizing the health risks of fluoride for many years. Tamara Thérèsa Mosegaard, MayDay’s chairwoman, noted, *“Our focus is upon working for optimal health for all. As such, clean drinking water without any added medicinal substances is a basic human right.”*

The alliance of NGOs opposed to fluoride is arguing that drinking water is an inappropriate medium for the delivery of fluoride, because - amongst many other things - it is impossible to control dosage owing to different levels of consumption. Additionally, toxicity varies greatly between different groups, with babies being the most sensitive group of all. The NGOs propose that any government wishing to promote fluoride for the purpose of reducing dental caries should make it, at most, optional and should ensure that in whatever appropriate form fluoride is delivered (e.g. as tablets, in toothpastes or mouthwashes) the dosage can be controlled according to body weight, age, medical condition and individual consent. The NGOs are also calling for an international ban on the fluoridation of drinking water, involving as it does, a medicine that is consumed involuntarily that has never been licenced by any national drugs regulator worldwide. Its use by governments is thus seen as a violation of the rights of individuals.

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CONTACTS

Alliance for Natural Health

The Alliance for Natural Health
The Atrium, Curtis Road
Dorking, Surrey RH4 1XA, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 1306 646600
Fax: +44 (0) 1306 646552
Email: info@anhcampaign.org
Website: www.anhcampaign.org

Dr Rath Health Foundation

Dr. Rath Health Foundation
Stralauer Platz 33/34
10243 Berlin
Germany
Tel: +49 (0) 30 246 479 100
Fax: +49 (0) 30 246 479 101
Email: info@dr-rath-foundation.org
Website : www4.dr-rath-foundation.org/

National Health Federation

The National Health Federation
P.O. Box 688
Monrovia, California 91017
USA
Tel: +1 626 357 2181
Fax: +1 626 303 0642
Email: contact-us@thenhf.com
Website: www.thenhf.com/

VOICE

Voice of Irish Concern for the Environment
9 Upper Mount Street
Dublin 2
Ireland
Tel: +353 1 642 5741
Media Contact: +353 86 811 3071
Email: avoice@iol.ie
Website: www.voiceireland.org

MayDay

MayDay, civil health rights movement
Rundforbivej 2, Troeroed
DK – 2060 Vedbaek
Denmark
Tel. +45 7020 7770
Fax : +45 7020 7771
E-mail: kontakt@mayday-info.dk
Main website: www.mayday-info.dk