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Mercury Dental Amalgams Banned in 3 Countries FDA, EPA, ADA Still Allow and Encourage Heavy-Metal Fillings

(OMNS, November 20, 2008) Any science teacher encouraging students to put mercury in their mouths would be fired for gross negligence and likely prosecuted for endangering the health of a child. Yet dentists do it every day.

And the US Food and Drug Administration lets them, all the while fully aware that there are serious safety concerns. At its website, FDA says, "Dental amalgams contain mercury, which may have neurotoxic effects on the nervous systems of developing children and fetuses. When amalgam fillings are placed in teeth or removed from teeth, they release mercury vapor. Mercury vapor is also released during chewing." (1) And a considerable amount is released, too. So-called "silver" fillings are 50% mercury.

In January 2008, Norway and Sweden totally banned mercury fillings. In April 2008, Denmark banned mercury fillings. Norwegian Minister of the Environment Erik Solheim said, "Mercury is among the most dangerous environmental toxins." (2)

You might think that the US Environmental Protection Agency, which restricts most forms of heavy metal pollution, would be concerned since they are very concerned about mercury toxicity from incinerators and coal-fired power plants. EPA lists the symptoms of mercury poisoning: "tremors; emotional changes (e.g., mood swings, irritability, nervousness, excessive shyness); insomnia; neuromuscular changes (such as weakness, muscle atrophy, twitching); headaches; disturbances in sensations; changes in nerve responses; performance deficits on tests of cognitive function." These detrimental effects are worst "particularly in warm or poorly-ventilated indoor spaces." The human body is warm. A closed mouth is a poorly-ventilated indoor space. In spite of all this, EPA does nothing to control the level of mercury in your teeth because "dental amalgams are considered medical devices and are regulated by U.S. Food and Drug Administration." (3)

And the FDA? FDA claims that their "advisory panel believed that there was not enough information to answer this question. Some other countries follow a 'precautionary principle' and avoid the use of dental amalgam in pregnant women." But FDA is grossly misrepresenting the problem. Three western countries have entirely banned mercury amalgams, period. For everyone and every age.

Make no mistake about it: FDA has both the specific responsibility and the authority to restrict amalgam fillings. If there were mercury in other medical devices, such as artificial heart valves or hip prostheses, they would be instantly banned. FDA has the power to stop the use of mercury fillings today.

Why don't they?

After all, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission tells parents to "Protect children . . . avoid fish with high levels of mercury." CPSC also says, "Keep children and mercury apart: Replace mercury thermometers with digital ones. Don't let kids handle or play with mercury." (4) We will not let a child play with or eat mercury. Should we let them have it drilled into their teeth?

Toys are recalled when they are dangerous. Cars have safety recalls. But not heavy-metal dental fillings, found in the teeth of almost our entire population.

Check the comprehensive list of recalls at the U.S. Government's Consumer Product Safety Commission's website. (<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prerel.html>) The CPSC describes itself as "charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from more than 15,000 types of consumer products. You can find information on over 4,000 product recalls and recall alerts using the various searches on this page," they say. Go ahead, try a search for "mercury" and see what you get (<http://search.cpsc.gov/query.html?qt=mercury&charset=iso-8859-1&col=recalls>).

Even though CPSC has information on "4,000 product recalls," there is not a word about dental mercury amalgam fillings. Not a single word.

But there is Release # 95-066 from January 23, 1995. It is not about fillings. It's about jewelry. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) announced a recall of necklaces "that bear small vials or glass balls containing the metal mercury (because) exposure to their vapor can cause long term health problems, especially for small children and pregnant women, if the vials or balls break."

Well, one did. "The Washington State Department of Health, Office of Toxic Substances, brought these potentially hazardous necklaces to the attention of CPSC after receiving a report that a vial had broken in a public school in Washington, which required evacuation of the students until the spill could be cleaned up."

It is interesting that the government will not allow jewelry, worn outside the body, to contain mercury. Exposure to mercury in a school classroom results in a building evacuation. Yet the same government lets the very same toxic metal, in similar quantities, be implanted into those kids' living teeth. It is ironic that so many of the children ordered out of the school to avoid exposure to mercury were taking their own implanted supply of mercury right along with them. And will continue to do so, for the life of their fillings.

Yes, amalgam fillings are durable. And yes, they have been around a long time. Mercury amalgam was widely used during the Civil War. (5) Before that, lead was sometimes used. Today everyone knows that lead is a toxic metal, totally inappropriate for insertion into the human body. The same is true with mercury. As technology advances, 19th century medical devices such as lancets and leeches, and heavy metal amalgam, must be discarded.

FDA could and should immediately recall the mercury fillings already implanted in the jaws of the nation. Why haven't they? Perhaps because as soon as any more mercury fillings are prohibited, tens of millions of people will want their existing ones removed. And then will likely follow the biggest class-action lawsuit in history.

One may see the handwriting on the wall. FDA has already deleted this specific statement from its website: "No valid scientific evidence has shown that amalgams cause harm to patients with dental restorations, except in the rare case of allergy." (<http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/consumer/amalgams.html>, accessed July 31, 2004)

The American Dental Association may have the most to lose. At its website (6), ADA states, "Dental amalgam (silver filling) is considered a safe, affordable and durable material that has been used to restore the teeth of more than 100 million Americans." Indeed, ADA may prefer that mercury amalgam be "considered safe" precisely BECAUSE it has been used in 100 million Americans. Imagine the scope of such a safety recall.

ADA continues: "ADA submitted comments to the FDA reflecting its conclusion that the current evidence does not support a link between dental amalgam and systemic diseases or risks to children, pregnant women or developing fetuses." Then, ADA concludes saying that "ADA continues to believe that amalgam is a valuable, viable and safe choice for dental patients."

What is noteworthy is that ADA has now (October 2008) deleted its former ending to this sentence, which originally went on to state: "and concurs with the findings of the U.S. Public Health Service that amalgam has 'continuing value in maintaining oral health.'" (7)

The US Public Health Service statement ADA was agreeing with has now also been deleted. The original PHS statement was, "The U.S. Public Health Service believes it is inappropriate at this time to recommend any restrictions on the use of dental amalgam . . . (C)urrent scientific evidence does not show that exposure to mercury from amalgam restorations poses a serious health risk in humans." (CDC/National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Oral Health Resources. <http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/publications/factsheets/amalgam.htm>, accessed July 31, 2004)

That entire webpage is gone.

The US Government and the ADA are setting the stage to avoid the biggest product-liability lawsuit in history. And as you read this, mercury is still being implanted into the living bone tissue of adults, pregnant women, and children.

References:

- (1) Questions and answers on dental amalgam. <http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/consumer/amalgams.html>
- (2) Dental mercury use banned in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Reuters, January 3, 2008. <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS108558+03-Jan-2008+PRN20080103>
- (3) Mercury: Human exposure. <http://www.epa.gov/earlink1/mercury/exposure.htm>
- (4) Children's Health Month Calendar, October 2002. <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/prhtml03/03004.pdf>
- (5) Glenner RA, Willey P. Dental filling materials in the Confederacy. Journal of the History of Dentistry. Vol. 46, No. 2. July, 1998, p 71-75. http://www.fauchard.org/publications/history/Journal_98_46_2p71.htm
- (6) ADA Positions & Statements: ADA Statement on Dental Amalgam. Revised: July 2008. <http://www.ada.org/prof/resources/positions/statements/amalgam.asp>
- (7) American Dental Association <http://www.ada.org/prof/resources/positions/statements/amalgam.asp>, revised January 8, 2003, accessed July 31, 2004.

For more information:

Additional information on the health effects of mercury is available from the EPA's IRIS database at <http://www.epa.gov/iris/subst/0370.htm>.

Norwegian press release: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/md/press-centre/Press-releases/2007/Bans-mercury-in-products.html?id=495138>

Norwegian Mercury Ban Regulation:

http://www.regjeringen.no/Upload/MD/Vedlegg/Forskrifter/product_regulation_amendment_071214.pdf

Danish Television link: <http://nyhederne.tv2.dk/article.php/id-9868029.html>

Danish Radio link: <http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2007/12/31/174314.htm?nyheder>

Swedish links: <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=147&a=728814> ;

http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/artikel_724369.svd

Cautionary advice about mercury amalgam fillings from regulatory agencies in other countries:

Canada: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/md-im/applic-demande/pubs/dent_amalgam-eng.php

France: <http://afssaps.sante.fr/ang/pdf/amalgam.pdf>

Sweden: <http://www.kemi.se/templates/Page.aspx?id=5233>

Review and commentary: <http://www.yourhealthbase.com/amalgams.html>

Also see: <http://www.mercurypolicy.org>

Video on amalgam fillings:

<http://www.foodmatters.tv/mercury-madness.html> video by the <http://www.iaomt.org/> (also at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yInQ-T7oiA>)

Another video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfVsUuhoFWY&feature=related>

The first medical journal to report on the toxicity of mercury amalgams was the Journal of Orthomolecular Medicine. For free access to the Journal's archive of peer-reviewed articles:

<http://orthomolecular.org/library/jom>