

Dental mercury is no health threat

February 26, 2007

Regarding the recent letter by Ms. Carlson about dental amalgam ("Mercury fillings are outdated," Feb. 12), let me share the facts with you and the public. It is extremely misleading for opponents to continue to refer to this restorative material as "mercury fillings." Dental amalgam is a mixture of tin, copper, silver and mercury. At the point at which these metals are mixed together, the mercury is bound together by the other metals and becomes inert. It is not a hazardous material at this point, just as hydrogen is no longer explosive when mixed with oxygen to form water.

Dental amalgam has a 100-year history behind its use. There are multiple scientific studies from reputable American institutions that have researched and studied amalgam for many, many years and they all have the same conclusion: There is little evidence to support a causal relationship between dental amalgam and human health problems.

Dentists have always pursued continuing education whether it was required by the state of Vermont or not. The materials and technology in our field have changed greatly through the years and dentists have become educated on these changes through continuing education courses on their own initiative. We did not need the government to tell us to do this.

I think it is important to note that claims are made about materials dentists use – what they should use and whether it is costly or not – by citizens that have not had a formal dental education, do not practice dentistry, do not witness the varying circumstances and issues for each patient and do not have a clue as to what dental materials cost. Let's listen to those that are in the field providing the treatment day in and

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Mercury amalgam contain 50% mercury and are therefore quite accurate in description. I am surprised that Dr. Fisch continues to talk about it becoming inert, despite being present at hearings clearly demonstrating it is not. People can watch a video of mercury vaporizing off a tooth at International Academy of Oral and Medicine and Toxicology. <http://www.iaomt.org/> This site also offers scientific research and references to hundreds of peer reviewed scientific studies on the harmful health effects of mercury from amalgams on the human body. I encourage patients to get well informed.

The US Committee on Government Reform held hearings on the safety of dental amalgam. Representative Dan Burton, Chairman, offered the following opening comment: “ In an attempt to lay a solid foundation of fact, we held a hearing on November 14, 2002 entitled, ‘Mercury in Dental Amalgams: An Examination of the Science. A representative of the American Dental Association and representatives of two Federal health agencies also appeared before the committee... Amazingly, none of those three individuals was aware of a single study, they didn't know of a single study that contradicted their oft-repeated refrain that mercury containing amalgams are safe and effective. They had heard of no study that pointed to health problems, not even one. But today you will hear a different story and testimony from Dr. Maths Berlin, a former Chair of the World Health Organization's International Project on Chemical Safety. (who) identified 936 scientific papers that dealt with the health implications of amalgam. They found that over 700 of those studies were credible.

Swedish scientists know about hundreds of such studies, but the American Dental Association, that represents over 147,000 American dentists doesn't know about a single one. “

You can read the full Burton transcripts and the Swedish dental report here: <http://www.mercuryfreehealth.org/>

Dentists are not qualified to assess human health risks. They are not trained in toxicology nor medicine. In fact the ADA legal stance is as follows:

day out.

Dentists have nothing to gain by the banning of dental amalgam, yet the citizens of Vermont have a lot to lose if this time-tested material is banned.

Judith M. Fisch, DDS, president
Vermont State Dental Society

"The ADA owes no legal duty of care to protect the public from allegedly dangerous products used by dentists. The ADA did not manufacture, design, supply or install the mercury-containing amalgams. The ADA does not control those who do. The ADA's only alleged involvement in the product was to provide information regarding its use. Dissemination of information relating to the practice of dentistry does not create a duty of care to protect the public from potential injury".

Source: Legal brief filed in 1995 by attorneys for the ADA in W.H. Tolhurst vs. Johnson and Johnson Consumer Products, Inc.; Engelhard Corporation; ABE Dental, Inc.; the American Dental Association, et al., in the Superior Court of the State of California, in and for the County of Santa Clara, CA, Case No. 718228.

I wonder if Dr. Fisch's insurer is aware of her continued public statements on amalgam, in the face of the overwhelming science. In conjunction with a lawsuit filed in 2004 in Ohio for damages from mercury fillings, Federal Insurance, a division of CHUBB, sued the ADA stating that the ADA is not insured for said damages by fact that the placement of mercury fillings was an intentional act regardless of known risks. (see Federal Insurance v. ADA) <http://www.mercuryfreehealth.org/>

Dentists actually have a great deal to gain by cessation of mercury amalgam. Numerous studies show increased health risks to dental personnel from amalgam use. Dentists will also gain the increased pride in knowing they did the very best they could to reduce mercury to the environment for all Vermonters, and to protect the health of all their patients.

Vermont dentists are faced with a choice to be leaders or laggards.

Susan Premo
Mercury Free Health