

Rick North
Private Citizen

TESTIMONY FOR NTP BOARD OF SCIENTIFIC COUNSELORS – MAY 4, 2023

My name is Rick North.

My background is in non-profit health management, 21 years for the American Cancer Society, the last five as CEO of the Oregon chapter, and seven years with Physicians for Social Responsibility before retiring.

I'm not a physician, scientist or dentist, but for more than a decade, I've collaborated with a large group of them all over North America firmly opposing water fluoridation. I'd like to comment on the NTP report through the lens of a lay person.

My stance is based on a very simple premise: Any chemical should be proven safe before exposing people to it.

I'm in good company. Last year, a University of California San Francisco survey found that 92% of voters believe the government should require products be proven safe before allowed on the market. 92% of agreement on anything is nearly unheard of.

Fluoride – at levels in fluoridated water – hasn't been proven safe. On the contrary, the NTP report found substantial evidence it's harmful. Therefore, it shouldn't be allowed. Better safe than sorry. First do no harm.

Let's put this in historical context. In 2006, a blue-ribbon National Research Council committee published their landmark review, Fluoride in Drinking Water. It wasn't charged with assessing fluoridation specifically, but was charged with finding gaps in scientific data. It was the most comprehensive, authoritative review of fluoride ever written.

It found, unequivocally, **“It is apparent that fluorides have the ability to interfere with the functions of the brain and the body.”** It examined five IQ studies in China, all linking higher fluoride with lower IQ. They were at water fluoridated at higher levels than the U.S., and varied in quality. But even with these limitations, the committee concluded, **“the consistency of the collective results warrants additional research.”** This need for more research flatly contradicted the prevailing narrative – then and now - that fluoridation was proven safe for everyone.

That was just five studies. In 2012, a Harvard-funded meta-analysis found that in 26 out of 27 studies children ingesting higher levels of fluoride tested an average 7 IQ points lower. Most had higher concentrations than in U.S. water, but many had total exposures comparable to millions of Americans. Philippe Grandjean, one of the world's leading experts on neurotoxicity, stated that, **“Fluoride seems to fit in with lead, mercury, and other poisons that cause chemical brain drain.”**

Today, the NTP meta-analysis found that out of 55 studies, 52 linked higher fluoride with lower IQs. Out of the 19 highest quality studies, 18 found this link. Again and again – the consistency is irrefutable.

Of course, experts can argue over the strengths and weaknesses of each study. But no one can argue that fluoridation has been proven safe.

The report tells the truth. On the fluoride link to IQ loss, NTP stated, **“We have no basis on which to state that our findings are not relevant to some children or pregnant people in the United States.”** It also said, **“Several of the highest quality studies showing lower IQs in children were done in optimally fluoridated (0.7 mg/L) areas.”**

You don’t have to be a scientist to know that 30 years of consistent scientific findings will not suddenly reverse themselves.

You don’t have to be a scientist to know that low-income families who can’t afford bottled water or expensive filters to avoid fluoridated water are disproportionately harmed.

The dose makes the poison. So can age and sex. With fluoridation, the dose that pregnant women and children ingest of this known neurotoxin depends upon, incredibly, how thirsty they are. You don’t have to be a scientist to know that this practice is absurd. This emperor has no clothes.

Every day fluoridation continues means thousands more babies are born at risk of permanent brain damage. This report – unadulterated by political interference – must see the light of day. Please, publish it as soon as possible and let’s stop this unnecessary, tragic harm.

Thank you.