

Fluoride or sugar?

Dr Roger Tuck (Letters, March 25) is adamant that fluoride is the answer to tooth decay, as it "is one of the most effective public health measures of all time, and has the potential to cut the devastating amount of tooth decay seen in our children".

Surely reducing/eliminating the quantity of sugars, both simple and complex, from our diet is a far more effective measure? Dr Tuck has seemingly passed this, rather obvious, solution by.

This would also reduce obesity, heart attacks, etc, etc.-

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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I'm sure Dr Tuck knows this already.

As for fluoridation being 'the most effective public health measure', really? How about public sanitation for starters? I think Dr Tuck has let his passion get away with him to write such hyperbole.

Also, "the science is done and dusted". Really, Dr Tuck? I don't believe that is true, ever. Surely the freedom to doubt and speak our minds is critical to having democracy.

I recall a famous 19th century scientist telling up-and-coming physics students to choose some other career, as everything in physics had already been discovered. There is plenty of opposing evidence to the current belief in fluoridation.

And finally, the choice of fluoridation, and it must always be a choice, is up to parents/individuals, not some overlord.

There seems to be a strong developing meme recently that we should all just accept the official line and stop questioning and speaking out, both with this fluoridation and the Covid meme especially, but also many other current topics. I am very suspicious of those who want us to just accept what they believe, often without offering any cause or evidence.

Carl Mather
Kerikeri

Ignorant or timid?

Any scientist or educator who has followed the science of fluoride's toxicity, especially its potential to

damage the developing brain, must be stunned to hear that the New Zealand government is set to introduce mandatory water fluoridation into the whole country.

Either New Zealand scientists and educators have not kept up with the science or have been too timid to challenge government policy. Whatever the explanation, they have let down the citizens of this country.

An early indication of this "scientific let-down" came to us in 2018. We were invited by citizens to present our concerns about fluoride's neurotoxicity to a meeting organised at the University of Otago in 2018. To our dismay, not one faculty member bothered to attend, but the front two rows were occupied by students wearing tin-foil hats, which was perhaps more a measure of the prejudice circulating on this subject in the only dental school in New Zealand rather than any serious study.

For those who retain an open mind on this issue, let us review the science.

Since 1995, human studies (largely from China) have appeared in the Western literature that showed lowered IQ in children exposed to high natural levels of fluoride. While many of these studies used limited methodologies, they were remarkably consistent in their findings.

For example, a meta-analysis done by Harvard researchers (Choi et al, 2012) showed that of 27 studies, 26 showed a lowering of IQ despite them being conducted by many different research teams, over a period of 21

years and across widely differing areas of China (and Iran).

In 2014, influential scientific commentators Sir Peter Gluckman and Sir David Skegg dismissed the relevance of this meta-analysis for New Zealand, erroneously claiming that the average loss was less than one IQ point when in fact the loss was actually 7 IQ points. Other than a confusing "correction" of this statement, nothing much has been heard from Gluckman and Skegg since.

Meanwhile, a dramatic change in the quality of these studies occurred in 2017 when the first of three mother-child studies funded by US agencies was published (Bashash, 2017, 2018, and Green, 2019). These very rigorous studies controlled for a large number of confounding variables and used double-blind individual measurements for both mother and child. Analysis of these data has shown a loss of about 4 IQ points in offspring for a range of 1mg/litre of fluoride in the mother's urine. This range is typical of fluoridated countries, including New Zealand.

The resulting articles have appeared in major peer-reviewed journals like *Environmental Health Perspectives* and the *Journal of American Medicine*.

A further Canadian study, published in 2020 by Till et al, found that children who were bottle-fed in fluoridated communities had lower IQs (up to 9 IQ points) than children bottle-fed in non-fluoridated communities.

Key authors of these studies, along

with Dr Linda Birnbaum (former head of the US National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences), have suggested that both pregnant women and parents who bottle-feed their babies avoid fluoride, including fluoridated water.

Why on Earth is New Zealand not putting an immediate halt to existing fluoridation programmes instead of making it mandatory for the whole country? And why are New Zealand's scientists and educators leaving it to voluntary organisations like Fluoride-Free NZ to issue critical warnings? We urge them to... speak up to protect the mental development of the next generation.

A decayed tooth can be fixed, a damaged brain cannot.

Full citations of all the references cited can be found on the webpage of the Fluoride Action Network (FluorideALERT.org).

Paul Connett, PhD
Vyvyan Howard, MB, ChB, PhD,
FRCPath

A bitter pill

The Government's latest move on the fluoridation bill to shift decision-making solely to the director-general of health proves its intention of mandatory fluoridation.

The Commission of Inquiry (in 1956) said it was important that the decision be made locally, with local input. The mayor of Whangārei recently agreed. So has the National Party. To shift decision-making into the hands of only one person defies all norms of democratic process.

The decision to give the director-general sole control is being done by the back door of a supplementary order paper. No select committee, no public input.

A few weeks ago Andrew Little was calling for a public scientific debate. Fluoride Free NZ accepted this invitation, many times. Where is the debate, Mr Little? Where is the science? Where is democracy?

Of course, a public debate would alert people to the following facts:

It is now beyond reasonable scientific doubt that fluoridation damages the infant brain as much as if not more than leaded petrol (shown by significant IQ loss); fluoridation chemicals are scrubbed from the chimneys of the phosphate fertiliser industry and contain traces of lead, arsenic, mercury and aluminium; the Supreme Court has ruled that fluoridation is forced medical treatment; New Zealand school dental statistics show no difference in tooth decay between fluoridated and non-fluoridated areas.

Tooth decay has declined in New Plymouth since fluoridation ceased in late 2011, at the same rate as fluoridated Hawera and Stratford.

At a time when we need to preserve every dollar to address the economic impacts of Covid-19, it makes zero sense to spend millions of dollars on fluoridation equipment that, the way science is going, will have to be scrapped in a few years' time.

Mary Byrne
National co-ordinator
Fluoride Free New Zealand