



Refer: FL-128
June 1985

BRITISH REVIEW REFUTES ALLEGATION OF FLUORIDATION-CANCER LINK

Once again, reputable and responsible scientists have validated the safety of community water fluoridation, particularly as it relates to cancer. The following excerpts from a recent British report further refute the allegation of a fluoridation-cancer link.

Background

Because allegations that fluoridation causes an increase in cancer have been of great public concern, The British Department of Health and Social Security requested that a committee be formed to examine the published data on cancer incidence and mortality in populations served by either adjusted community water fluoridation or naturally fluoridated water.

The 11 member Working Party on Fluoridation and Cancer was appointed by the Department of Health and Social Security, United Kingdom, and included representatives from the areas of cancer epidemiology and pathology, social medicine, epidemiological research, water research, medical statistics, and biostatistics. The Working Party reviewed the American studies of Yiamouyiannis and Burk, studies that analyzed the Yiamouyiannis and Burk studies, and additional studies conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom, and ten additional countries. The following are excerpts from the Summary and Conclusions:

"The most recent general review in the United Kingdom of the evidence on the health effects of the fluoridation of water supplies was undertaken by the Committee of the Royal College of Physicians of London in 1976. The review concluded that fluoridation is safe, and in particular that 'there is no evidence that fluoride increases the incidence of mortality in any organ'."

"Since the College Committee reported, the results of a number of new epidemiological investigations have become available, and the authors of some of the studies have claimed that increased cancer rates were associated with fluoridation. This Working Party was therefore set up to undertake a fresh review of the epidemiological studies."

"We have reviewed studies of cancer rates in relation to fluoride naturally present in drinking water and in relation to fluoridation of water supplies. We have found no evidence in these studies to

suggest that fluoride or fluoridation is associated with increased cancer rates. Conclusions to the opposite effect, by others, arose whether from failure to allow adequately for important demographic and socioeconomic differences between the compared populations, or from failure to take account of the range of cancer rates commonly observed irrespective of fluoridation. When cancer rates were analyzed to take account of these matters, the patterns within fluoridated and non-fluoridated communities were found to be almost identical. Indeed, the populations with greater exposure to fluoride in the water tended to have slightly lower rates of cancer mortality and incidence."

"We have found nothing in any of the major classes of epidemiological evidence which could lead us to conclude that either fluoride occurring naturally in water, or fluoride added to water supplies, is capable of inducing cancer, or of increasing mortality from cancer (underlining supplied). This statement applies both to cancer as a whole, and to cancer at a large number of specific sites. In this we concur with the great majority of scientific investigators and commentators in this field. The only contrary conclusions are in our view attributable to errors in data, errors in analytical technique, and errors in scientific logic (underlining supplied)."

"The evidence permits us to comment positively on the safety of fluoridated water in this respect. The absence of demonstrable effects on cancer rates in the face of long-term exposures to naturally elevated levels of fluoride in the water; the absence of any demonstrable effect on cancer rates following the artificial fluoridation of water supplies; the large human populations observed; the consistency of the findings from many different sources of data in many different countries; lead us to conclude that in this respect the fluoridation of drinking water is safe."

Dental Disease Prevention Activity
Center for Prevention Services

Reference:

Knox, E.G., chairman. Fluoridation of water and cancer: a review of the epidemiological evidence; report of the Working Party. London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1985. 116 p.