

To: Daniel Ryan, Making Sense of Fluoride

From: Rita Barnett-Rose

RE: CWF Working Paper Article

Date: 9/25/14

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Dear Daniel,

I have now had a chance to consider your comments to my draft article. In some respects, I am flattered that you have devoted so much time to an unpublished working paper, and I thank you for giving me some of your opinions. I absolutely want to make sure that I have cited to sources accurately and have not mischaracterized any particular study I reviewed. To that end, I have now engaged independent review of my article from several highly-qualified scientists/researchers with the specific request that they review my article for scientific accuracy. After I have received their comments, I will revise my draft accordingly.

Unfortunately (or fortunately for me), I did not find in your review any specific places where I actually mischaracterized any cited study. Instead, your primary points of contention seem to be twofold: (1) you object to my use of Fluoride Action Network's ("FAN") website as a cited source; and (2) you object to my failure to include contrary studies that reaffirm the (English-speaking countries') public health agencies'/dental lobby positions on the safety and benefits of compulsory water fluoridation.

First, with respect to my reliance on FAN. Of the 209 footnote references in my article, I believe only 17 of them are cites to FAN. Of those 17 cites, I am citing to the FAN website primarily as an easy way to get to the primary source material (e.g., studies or newspaper articles from around the world). For example, in footnotes 85-87, I could have listed the primary source studies, but I have found that many of these studies are hard to get on the internet for those who do not have paid subscriptions to the various science databases. I myself had to order a number of the primary sources from my University intra-library loan system and felt that it would be better to simply provide a link so that the reader could see the names of the studies and determine for himself/herself how to get to those primary sources. Nevertheless, your point is well-taken that I should not give the appearance of relying upon an advocacy group (including yours), and I will review those 17 cites to see if I should instead cite to primary sources.

Second, with respect to your complaint or desire that I cite to contrary (i.e., pro-fluoridation) studies in addition to (or in lieu of) the published studies that I cite that tend to weigh against

fluoridation, as I have already indicated to you on two occasions: I am not interested in a battle of the studies debate, and I urge you to conduct such a battle with a more appropriate sparring partner, such as FAN-NZ. Specifically: you complain about FAN not being a legitimate source of credible scientific information, but your organization is also a political advocacy (pro-fluoridation) group, and, from your critique, you are just as guilty of “cherry picking” your sources and your studies as you suggest I am. Moreover, and in stark contrast to you, the section of my article where the studies are discussed is specifically entitled: “Scientific Evidence *Against* Compulsory Water Fluoridation.” It is not meant to be an exhaustive examination of all studies on fluoridation and is specifically and accurately identified for what it is. I am well aware of many of the pro-fluoridation studies -- as well as the criticisms of many of those studies (in terms of who funded them, flaws in methodology, conflicts of interest, etc.) by those opposed to fluoridation. I do not believe either side has definitively proved their case with respect to safety/benefits or lack thereof. However, what I do believe is that the burden of proving safety and effectiveness lies with the pro-fluoridation side, as it is your side that is insisting on imposing this “public health measure” on everyone else, even in the face of substantial objection and despite existing studies suggesting serious risks of harm. It also appears to me that the pro-fluoridation side is playing “whack a mole” with the studies weighing against CWF – often trying to hammer down/marginalize the opposition each time a negative study pops up, rather than trying to consider the evidence objectively. I note throughout your critique that you often refer to studies that weigh against fluoridation as “flawed” or “debatable” or as somehow lacking in proper control mechanisms – while studies that support fluoridation are “quality studies.” (p.8). You also minimize any existing evidence weighing against fluoridation by qualifying it: “there is no quality research” (p. 4) “there is no robust evidence” (p. 4), “there is no strong evidence” (p. 6). However, to me, if even one strong study exists, then the entire compulsory practice must be reevaluated.

Please also note that any and all of your cites to the ADA lobby, or to the CDC (which, though its oral health division, works hand in hand with the ADA promoting fluoridation and thus has a serious conflict of interest/credibility problem) are unpersuasive to me – as they should be to anyone conducting even a minimum level of research into the history of and politics behind fluoridation (some of which is chronicled in my article, including the story of the EPA’s NTEU battle). Incidentally, as someone who did not have a pony in this race before doing the actual research (i.e., I am not a long-time anti-fluoridation advocate), it does not take long to discover how politically motivated many “public health agencies” and “professional dental associations” are -- or how willing they are to obscure, minimize, or bury contrary evidence or to marginalize the anti-fluoridation messengers, regardless of the evidence or the credentials of those messengers (e.g., Waldbott, Taylor, Marcus, Mullenix, Bassin, Hirzy).

With respect to the NRC Report, I agree with you that it did not specifically address compulsory water fluoridation. However, I believe that its review of fluoride toxicology is highly relevant to exposures from fluoridated water (and its exposure data itself suggests that some people drinking fluoridated water can, indeed, receive doses that can cause adverse health effects, including severe dental fluorosis and bone fractures). In addition, in a number of health risk areas, the NRC panel concluded that there was not enough data, and/or that more research needed to be conducted, before definitive statements could be made with respect to other potential adverse health effects due to excess exposure to fluoride. This is hardly a ringing endorsement of the safety of fluoride or fluoridation. Nor is the NRC Report irrelevant to the fluoridation debate.

I see no point in going through your critique page by page to point out various flaws in it, as mostly you seem to be trying to persuade me with contrary evidence rather than identifying any mischaracterizations of the studies I did cite. I will, however, point out that your opening accusation on p. 2 that my “paper starts off by saying there is mounting scientific evidence against fluoridation” and that I used an opinion piece by John Colquhoun as my “evidence” to support this statement is outrageously incorrect, and it almost prompted me not to respond to you at all, as I do not appreciate my words being twisted or my cites misused to inflate your argument. This statement about “mounting scientific evidence” at the start of my paper (near fn. 2) actually references an entire section of my article – (“See discussion infra Sec. II-B”) -- and not an opinion piece by Colquhoun, which is only referenced – appropriately – at footnote 65 (referring to “formerly avid fluoride proponents” who have changed their minds). I have no desire to engage with insincere zealots, so I hope that you simply made a mistake there.

As I said to you privately, I am more than willing to revise my article where I have misstated any of the cited scientific evidence. However, I disagree with you that a discussion on the legal and ethical aspects of CWF would be “confusing” or “pointless” at this point and I would genuinely be interested in knowing why you feel so strongly that imposing this practice on everyone is ethically justifiable. Data published by the WHO suggests that the decline in dental caries is similar in both fluoridated and unfluoridated countries, and I have heard of no massive outbreak of a worldwide dental carie epidemic that has been attributed to a lack of fluoridated water (rather than to poverty, poor nutrition, or a lack of access to proper dental care). Thus, I am very curious as to why there appears to be such an aggressive campaign on the pro-fluoridation side to impose this practice on the world – and why anyone believes that personal liberties and rights to bodily integrity should be sacrificed for a public health practice addressing a non-contagious disease. I would also be interested in understanding where you personally believe compulsory public health practices should begin and end (e.g., do you believe governments should *mandate* compulsory flu shots? What about the HPV vaccine that the Governor of Texas tried to mandate for girls? Where should the personal right to bodily

integrity begin and end, in your opinion? And how comfortable are you with public health officials mandating what is good for you? Do you contend that they haven't been wrong on a public health issue before?).

As for me, I remain convinced that CWF is legally and ethically unjustifiable. My article sets forth my reasons, so I won't repeat those arguments here. These reasons would remain even if compulsory water fluoridation were proven to be entirely safe, which it most definitely has not, despite the presumed "majority" view in the English speaking countries. You will also find many of my reasons articulated by dissenting justices in fluoridation cases over the last 60+ years, when presumably even less "science" was available to support their nevertheless valid legal/ethical objections to CWF. I include some of these cases and dissenting opinions in my article.

Daniel, I thank you for your (heretofore) civilized exchange with me and I do welcome your thoughts if you have any on the legal and ethical justifications of CWF. After this exchange, however, I am only interested in a private discussion with you, which is something you may not be interested in as it may not advance your organization's agenda. However, your facebook posting has generated some contact to me by a few rude (and seemingly unbalanced) pro-fluoridation folks, and I have no interest in entertaining their rants (which certainly do nothing but convince me that the pro-fluoridation side has something to hide). In any event, I do thank you for reaching out and for your interest in my article. I hope to ensure that my final draft will address any legitimate criticisms/issues.

Sincerely,

Rita