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Danger of Bone Cancer From Fluoride in Toothpaste, Drinking Water

CHICAGO, IL, January 24, 2011 --/WORLD-WIRE/-- As reported in the January 13, 2011 New York Times, Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) warned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that the move to phase out a fluoride-based pesticide "could create unintended consequences for public health, food safety, and the economy."

Cancer Prevention Coalition Chairman Samuel S. Epstein, M.D. said today that Senator Inhofe may be right about such possible "unintended consequences."

"However," said Dr. Epstein, "he is unaware that these consequences would be clearly beneficial, as they protect against the risks of bone cancer from the use of fluoride in most brands of toothpaste to prevent cavities, and from the fluoridation of drinking water."

In 1977, the National Academy of Sciences expressed concerns on the strong relation between the fluoridation of drinking water and risks of bone cancer to young boys, Dr. Epstein points out.

A decade later, the International Agency for Research on Cancer reported that fluorides in drinking water induced bone cancer in rats. This finding was confirmed by the National Toxicology Program in its 1989, 1990, and 1991 reports.

"Not surprisingly, Procter & Gamble, the leading manufacturer of fluoridated toothpastes, denied that these results were statistically significant," Dr. Epstein said today. "Surprisingly, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) supported this claim."

Well-documented evidence links bone cancer to fluoride exposure, Dr. Epstein advises.

In 1990, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) reported that, based on an analysis of 1973 to 1987 data, the incidence of a bone cancer, known as osteosarcoma, was increased in males under the age of 20 living in areas where the drinking water was fluoridated. Not surprisingly, this was promptly denied by Procter & Gamble, the major manufacturer of fluoridated toothpaste.

In 1992, the New Jersey Department of Health published a study confirming higher rates of bone cancer in young boys living in fluoridated versus non-fluoridated areas of the state.

A 1993 independent analysis of the 1990 NCI data confirmed excess risks and deaths from bone cancer in young boys exposed to fluoride. These findings were confirmed in a 2001 report by the Harvard School of Dental Medicine. In 2006, a Harvard University team of scientists published a study reporting a five-fold increased risk of bone cancer in teenage boys who had drunk fluoridated water between the ages of 6 and 8. Apart from exposure to fluoride in drinking water, these findings also incriminated fluoride commonly added to toothpaste.

In July 1997, the Washington Post published an article "Toothpaste: How Safe." This noted that the label of Crest toothpaste carried a small print warning: "If you accidentally swallow more than used for brushing, seek professional help or contact a poison control center immediately." Warning labels to this effect had also been required by the FDA in April that year. The Post article further warned that children age 4 to 6 usually swallow some toothpaste when brushing, rather than spitting it out and rinsing.

"Concerns on fluoride as a major avoidable cause of bone cancer are further and urgently validated by its unrecognized 20 percent increased incidence in children under the age of 15 over the last three decades," Dr. Epstein warns, "as documented in the 1975-2007 National Cancer Institute Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) report."

As currently emphasized by Chris Neurath, research director of the American Environmental Health Studies Project, these concerns are all the more critical as 200 million citizens of all ages are still drinking fluoridated water.

Apart from bone cancer, and as warned by the Fluoride Action Network (FAN) last week, "24 studies have shown an association between exposure to moderate to high levels of fluoride in drinking water and lower IQ

(and brain damage) in children."

Dr. Epstein says, "A ban by the FDA on fluoridated toothpaste is well overdue, as is a ban by the EPA on the fluoridation of drinking water."

Samuel S. Epstein, M.D. is professor emeritus of Environmental and Occupational Medicine at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health, and Chairman of the Cancer Prevention Coalition; and former President of the Rachel Carson Trust. His awards include the 1998 Right Livelihood Award and the 2005 Albert Schweitzer Golden Grand Medal for International Contributions to Cancer Prevention. Dr. Epstein has authored 270 scientific articles and 20 books on the causes, prevention and politics of cancer. These include "The Legislation of Product Safety" (1974, MIT Press); the groundbreaking "The Politics of Cancer" (1979, Anchor Press/Doubleday); "Hazardous Waste in America" (1982, Sierra Club Books); "The Breast Cancer Prevention Program" (1997, Macmillan); "The Politics of Cancer Revisited" (1998, East Ridge Press); "What's In Your Milk?" (2006, Trafford Publishing); and "Healthy Beauty" (2010, Benbella Books).

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