

YOURVIEW

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The question of science, ethics and water fluoridation



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Ireland commenced its policy of water fluoridation in the late 1960s before joining the European Union. We did this at a time when other European countries were openly questioning the benefit and risks associated with this policy.

Today, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland have all rejected water fluoridation entirely. The policy has also been discontinued in countries such as China and Japan on human health risk grounds, and in the past few years over 800 cities and communities in the USA and Canada have also discontinued water fluoridation, the most recent examples being the cities of Santa Fe, New Mexico and Orilla, Canada.

INFORMATION BREAKDOWN

This is not something you ever read about in the Irish press nor do you hear that the policy has been successfully challenged in the U.S. Courts and found to be

lacking scientific credibility and harmful to human health and the environment. Neither are people informed that most European Governments believe such a policy to be unethical or that European courts have found fluoridation of public water supplies to be unlawful.

So why is it that Ireland remains the only member state within the European Community and one of only two countries in the entire world (the other being Singapore) with a nationally mandated legislative policy on water fluoridation?

Why is it that countries such as Denmark and Sweden effectively banned water fluoridation following independent risk benefit assessments that demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt how the long-term toxicological effects of fluoride on humans and on the environment far overshadows any potential minor beneficial effects associated with fluoridation of drinking water; while Ireland maintains it is both effective and safe?

In science there is no middle ground. Even our closest neighbour the UK found that the evidence for water fluoridation did not stack up, in their comprehensive study commissioned by the NHS. In fact the chairman of the review body, Professor Sheldon, had to take the

unprecedented step of publishing a letter to counter pro-fluoridation bodies deliberately misrepresenting the findings of their review with the intention of misleading the public into believing that water fluoridation was safe.

NEW FINDINGS

Even as I write this researchers at Harvard University have just published a major study that documented how fluoride in water can cause permanent neurological damage to children. Previously in 2006 researchers at this University found fluoride in water caused Osteosarcoma an often fatal bone cancer.

This raises serious questions about who exactly are the government advisors to this policy, and how independent they may be in evaluating the risk of such a policy, especially when government agencies across Europe have all largely found that the quality of science supporting fluoridation to be deliberately misleading and biased and scientific reporting to be so poor and flawed as to be of little scientific merit.

It is not just the science argument however that concerns European governments; many believe such policies violate civil rights laws and the ethics of democratic governance by enforcing mandatory medication of their populations without informed consent.

No citizen of Ireland has given their consent to have their drinking water medicated with a substance that is used to treat disease.

RISK ASSESSMENT

In 2005 the European Court of Justice determined that no 'medicinal product' may be given to consumers without appropriate scientific risk assessments taking into account the varying degrees of sensitivity of different consumers groups.

In the case of water fluoridation, high risk groups include infants; diabetics; individuals with nutrient deficiencies; the older population; people with thyroid disease and kidney failure.

No health risk assessment studies have ever been undertaken in Ireland

or elsewhere, on water fluoridation. The U.S. National Research Council and most recently the European Commission's Scientific Committee for Health and Environmental Risk both found that the toxicology of water fluoridation chemicals are incompletely investigated.

Ultimately we are products of our own actions and environment. In pursuing such a policy it was never fully considered that most of the fluoride we needlessly ingest ends up permanently bound to our bones, calcified tissues and organs with certain health impacts.

Likewise we also failed to consider how artificially fluoridating millions of litres of water a day with a chemical compound that is defined as a persistent environmental toxin may itself impact on the environment. Incredibly no environmental impact assessment has ever been undertaken to investigate how a listed dangerous substance in EU law may be impacting on the quality of our environment.

For a country once famed for its freshwater fisheries, this is of particular importance given international research has identified that juvenile salmon are extremely sensitive to fluoride which has been found to be lethal to them at concentrations far below those currently present in treated fluoridated water.

By continuing its mandatory policy of water fluoridation, Ireland is exposing its citizens and its environment to unnecessary risk contrary to its international legal obligations that enshrine the 'precautionary principle' into the governance of this State.

To find out more, download my report: Human Toxicity, Environmental Impact and legal Implications of Water Fluoridation from <http://www.enviro.risk.html>

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