

For Immediate Release

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FDA Hearings on Neurotoxic Effects of Dental Mercury in National First

For the first time, FDA will soon hold hearings on the neurotoxic effects of amalgam. In so doing, according to advocates, FDA has finally begun to pry control of this issue away from dental associations by empowering a neurology-based advisory committee to hear evidence on the issue.

“Dentists aren’t qualified to make decisions concerning neurotoxic effects of mercury,” said Michael Bender of the Mercury Policy Project. “But it’s been like pulling teeth to get FDA to take control of this issue out of the hands of mercury dentists.”

Until now, FDA has been the "silent partner" to the American Dental Association in protecting—and even promoting—dental mercury fillings, say advocates. Disregarding the science, FDA has stated that amalgam only causes "allergies," while it provided control of the process to ADA dentists, who were plainly unqualified for the task. Yet thanks to the involvement of two high-ranking FDA officials, this may change.

“Hearings can presage action or be a classic Washington stall tactic,” said Charlie Brown from Consumers for Dental Choice. “To date, FDA has not changed its position on amalgam—no classifying, no pre-market approval, no warnings to pregnant women and children, no disclosure of the mercury. While we praise FDA officials for introducing the neurotoxicity issue, we must still consider a challenge to FDA’s regulation of amalgam.”

While amalgam makers warn dentists about mercury amalgam, these risks aren’t passed on to patients, said Bender. Warnings from amalgam maker Dentsply/Caulk states: "The use of amalgam is contraindicated. In children 6 and under..." and "...In expectant mothers." And Kerr, Inc. warns: "The health authorities of the various countries, including Canada, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Austria have recommended against the placement or removal of an amalgam in certain individuals such as pregnant and nursing women and persons with impaired kidney function.”

FDA announced that public hearings will be held in Gaithersburg, Maryland on September 6 and 7, 2006 before a joint meeting of the Dental Products Panel and the Peripheral and Central Nervous System Drugs Advisory Committee.

FDA’s announcement:

<http://www.fda.gov/oc/advisory/acalendar/2006/cdrh12518dd09060706.html>

Recent Zogby International poll on consumer attitudes about dental mercury:

<http://www.mercurypolicy.org/new/documents/WhatPatientsDontKnow.pdf>

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