



The Primitive Medical Practice that Refuses to Die: Public Health Group Adopts Contradictory Positions on Mercury

By Dr. Joe Mercola



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A preliminary vote endorsing the continued use of dental amalgam (mercury fillings) has put the spotlight on the *American Public Health Association* (APHA), since it has long recognized the harm to the environment and public health of mercury releases.

The *Association* is the only progressive multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to public health in the US, representing more than 60,000 health care workers. It has been an important organization for the validation of many of our environmental health resolutions over the last 20 years.

As one of the largest public health associations, it has great influence within the *World Federation of Public Health Associations*, so its position on this issue will be viewed as a broad pronouncement about what is good for the public's health; not just within the United States, but also abroad.

The APHA policy notes that amalgam's contribution to environmental mercury contamination is minimal, and that limiting or curtailing its availability could have negative health consequences, particularly in low-income areas.

Members are urging the association to reconcile its contradictory positions before a final vote on the resolution early next year. However, if this resolution passes, it will keep dentistry firmly lodged in the proverbial Stone Age; putting countless people's health at risk.

Dental amalgam is a primitive, polluting product—an antiquated remnant from the Civil War era—which is composed of about 50 percent mercury, a well-known neurotoxin. Once released into the environment, dental mercury converts to methylmercury and contaminates fish, which are the largest dietary source of mercury in the U.S.

The environmental impact of dental mercury simply cannot be overlooked. The resolution claims that mercury fillings' contribution to overall mercury pollution is "negligible"—when in reality, dentists are the number one purchaser of mercury in America for product use and the number one polluter of mercury into municipal waste water.

The ADA Statement: "The American Dental Association (ADA) supports the American Public Health Association's recent policy statement affirming that dental amalgam is safe and effective in treating dental cavities."

Will APHA, Like the ADA, Continue to Ignore the Science?

Contrary to ADA claims, a recent report from the *World Health Organization* (WHO) states that the amount of dental mercury entering the environment is "significant." Contrary to APHA's recommendation that "dental professionals continue the use of dental amalgam as a restorative material," the WHO report calls for a "phasing-down" of dental amalgam use. While a few dental trade groups still believe amalgam is safe for all, the WHO report reached a very different conclusion: "Amalgam has been associated with general health concerns."

WHO also noted: "Amalgam (mercury fillings) releases a 'significant amount of mercury' into the environment, including

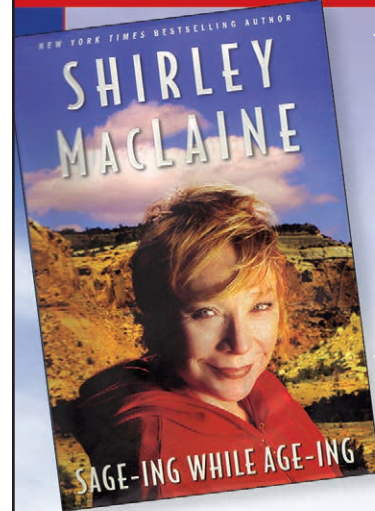
the atmosphere, surface water, groundwater, and soil. When released from dental amalgam into the environment, mercury is transported globally and deposited. Mercury releases may then enter the human food chain especially via fish consumption."

The report also mentioned the known toxic effects of mercury exposure, stating: "Mercury is highly toxic and harmful to health... Health effects from excessive mercury exposure include tremors, impaired vision and hearing, paralysis, insomnia, emotional instability, developmental deficits during fetal development, and attention deficit and developmental delays during childhood."

The APHA still has time to undo its mistake. The final decision does not come until February. Consumers for Dental Choice leads the battle for mercury-free dentistry both in the US and worldwide. Its financial needs are greater than ever, so we ask for your help! Please consider a donation to: Consumers for Dental Choice, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to advocating mercury-free dentistry. Checks can be mailed to: Consumers for Dental Choice, 316 F St., N.E., Suite 210, Washington, D.C., 20002.

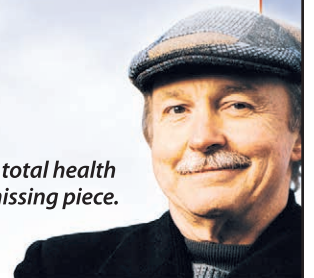
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~ Albert Schweitzer

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