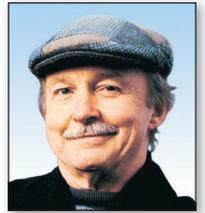


Americans Have a Right to Know

Excerpted from an article by Charlie Brown, attorney for *Consumers for Dental Choice*



Bill Wolfe D.D.S.

It's amazing that 57 percent of Americans do not know silver amalgam dental fillings contain mercury (Zogby Analytics).

Mercury began being used as a principal component of dental fillings more than 180 years ago, and controversy surrounding its use in dentistry began almost immediately. In the 1840's, dentists were required to sign a pledge not to place mercury fillings to be a member of the *American Society of Dental Surgeons* (precursor of the ADA, which was formed in 1859),

Early on, the dental industry tried to circumvent the controversy about dental mercury by calling it something else. Terms like "amalgam" and "silver fillings" became the new name for a product that's primarily mercury.

1. The controversy over the health impact of mercury dental fillings continues, but *Consumers for Dental Choice* believes that Americans—whatever their views on dental mercury—have a right to know exactly what their dentists are putting in their mouths so they can make informed healthcare decisions for themselves and their families. The purpose of this report is to demonstrate that Americans—after decades of false labeling by the dental industry—have been "measurably misled" about dental mercury and what

that means both here at home and internationally. The impact is big according to the *United Nations Environment Program*, as the use of mercury in tooth fillings represents 10% of global mercury consumption, making it one of the largest consumer uses of mercury in the world.

2. In the United States, amalgam constitutes the largest amount of mercury used in products.

3. Dentists are the 2nd largest users of elemental mercury in the U.S. and place over 30 million mercury fillings annually.

4. The *American Dental Association* estimates that 50% of mercury in waste water is from dental amalgam.

5. As a way to bring global focus to mercury issues, last year the United States signed and ratified the *Minamata Convention* on mercury, which requires the phase down of the use of mercury to protect human health and the environment.

6. Americans not knowing about the mercury content in their dental fillings creates a serious obstacle to fulfilling this commitment, because countries which have successfully phased down mercury dental fillings begin by assuring transparency in the marketplace.

7. *Consumers for Dental Choice* asked *Zogby Analytics* to poll 1500 Americans to learn exactly what they know and don't know about mercury dental fillings. *Zogby* asked these questions:

- Amalgam is a common dental filling material. What is the primary metal in amalgam fillings?
- Dental amalgam fillings, also called "silver fillings," contain 50% mercury. Do you feel "silver" fillings is a misleading term for a material that is mainly mercury?
- The *American Dental Association* has long called amalgam "silver fillings" or "silvercolored fillings." Did your dentist ever tell you that these fillings are mainly made of mercury?
- Do you think a government agency, or a court of law, should stop companies and dentists from promoting mercury amalgam as "silver fillings"?
- Do you feel your dentist provided you with enough information on alternatives to mercury amalgam to enable you to make a truly informed decision about the procedure?

This report (www.toxicteeth.org) summarizes what we learned from that poll and shows how the dental industry and the U.S. *Food and Drug Administration (FDA)* keep consumers unaware of amalgam's mercury content and why the FDA needs to raise consumer awareness now, in order to actively promote the phase down of amalgam. (See www.zeromercury.org) Americans have a right to know what their dentists are putting in their mouth. www.toxicteeth.org

Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe. ~ Albert Einstein

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