

**CONSUMERS AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS CALL ON
STATE DENTAL BOARD TO
“OPEN WIDE AND SAY THE ‘M’ WORD”**

*Demand Board not adopt Fact Sheet that
covers-up the dangers of Mercury in dentistry*

OAKLAND, CA, Friday, August 3, 2001 -- Anti-Mercury consumer activists and environmental leaders are demanding that the state Dental Board not adopt a draft dental materials Fact Sheet that covers-up the risks of Mercury in dental fillings, and offered its own, patient-oriented, full-disclosure Fact Sheet. The state Department of Consumer Affairs has judged the Board's draft Fact Sheet to be “[legally] deficient in numerous ways.”

The activists spoke of their concerns about the potential direct health hazards to dental patients with Mercury amalgam fillings -- particularly pregnant women and children -- and to the general public because of ground water contamination by improperly disposed of used dental fillings.

Speaking at a press conference called to coincide with the Dental Board meeting in Oakland on Friday were representatives from Consumers for Dental Choice, the American Academy of Biological Dentistry and Clean Water Action.

“The State of California Dental Board, acting as an arm of the American Dental Association, continues to cover up the dangers of Mercury in dental fillings, in defiance of the law and the increasing scientific evidence,” said Charles G. Brown, the lead attorney in the national legal battle against Mercury in dentistry and a former West Virginia state Attorney General. “It is long past time for the Dental Board to ‘open wide’ and start using the ‘M’ word. By refusing to adopt an accurate, full disclosure Fact Sheet, they continue to deceive consumers into thinking amalgam fillings are made of silver, when in fact the major component -- about 50% -- is Mercury and only about 25% of a Mercury amalgam filling is composed of silver.

“Mercury is universally recognized as an extremely dangerous toxin,” Brown continued. “One filling contains 750 milligrams of Mercury, enough to contaminate a small lake. The Dental Board and the ADA are out of the

medical mainstream in claiming that Mercury is safe for use in human beings. The rest of the medical world is eliminating the use of Mercury in all other circumstances. People have the right to know the truth from the dental establishment about the dangers of Mercury.”

“The Dental Board, like the ADA and the CDA, is out of step not only with the rest of the medical community, but with California law,” said attorney Shawn Khorrami, who has sued the Dental Board, the ADA and CDA in California Superior Court. “The State of California identifies Mercury as a toxic substance, and under Prop. 65, therefore, dentists are required to warn their patients about it. Our complaint is not with individual dentists, many of whom share our concern about the use of Mercury, but with the Dental Board, too many of whose members seem to have a vested interest in the continued use of Mercury.”

“We believe that the dental industry has not taken responsibility for the toxic Mercury that they release into our waters every day,” said Lena Brook of Clean Water Action, speaking for her organization as well as Health Care Without Harm and the California Public Interest Research Group. “Waste from dental offices and from people with Mercury fillings gets into our sewer systems and eventually into the waters that we fish. Eating fish contaminated with Mercury, a potent neurotoxin, has been proven to affect brain development in children. In fact, according to recent estimates by the Centers for Disease Control, one in ten women of childbearing age are now at risk of having children with neurological defects due to Mercury exposure.”

Also participating in the press conference were Anita Tibau of Orange County, who has suffered from medical problems attributed to Mercury in dental fillings. Tibau explained that she had acute asthma for two decades, symptoms that began when the fillings were placed and ended when they were removed. “If the dentist had only told me that the fillings were half Mercury, I would never have put them in,” she said.

“Consumers should be worried,” Tibau continued. “The Dental Board has done everything in its power to protect the ADA and the continued use of Mercury. The stated mission of the Dental Board of California is ‘to protect the California consumer.’ But their arrogant attempt to ram-through a Fact Sheet that covers-up the dangers of Mercury in dental fillings -- at the very moment that the Legislature is voting to shut them down -- is

callous and blatantly anti-consumer. This board has its head in the guillotine, and all it can think to do is to say, 'Let them eat Mercury.' We hope that the State Legislature and Governor Davis will act to put this anti-consumer board out of business so that the rights and interests of the people of California can be protected.”

“The amount of Mercury in each dental filling is colossal by medical standards,” said Dr. Andrew Landerman, DDS, a Santa Rosa dentist representing the American Academy of Biological Dentistry. “Mercury amalgam is dangerous before it goes into the mouth, and it is a hazardous material when it comes out. Each filling has 750,000 micrograms of Mercury. A person with four fillings has three grams of Mercury in his or her mouth, enough to shut down a lake, a school, or a business.”

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For further information: www.toxicteeth.net

Background on the Dangers of Mercury and the Controversy about Mercury in Dentistry

“Mercury, a metallic chemical that is liquid at ordinary temperatures, has been linked to several cognitive and developmental ailments in the brain, spinal cord,

kidneys, liver and lungs. It is especially damaging to young children and to fetuses. After mercury is vaporized in incinerators or dumped in sewage-treatment plants, it often gathers in bodies of water, where fish ingest it. People can be poisoned when they eat fish contaminated with mercury... Perhaps the most pervasive use of mercury is in the amalgam of metals used in most dental fillings.”

- “Bill Seeks to Ban Use of Mercury In a Variety of Common Products”
By James C. McKinley Jr.
The New York *Times*, February 7, 2001

The state Dental Board is on the verge of being put out of business by the California Legislature for malfeasance. SB26, which would eliminate the board effective immediately, passed the State Assembly on Thursday, July 12 by a vote of 66 to 8. It will be taken up by the State Senate for an expected concurrence vote when they return from recess later this month, and then be sent to Governor Gray Davis. The bill’s author, Sen. Liz Figueroa (D-Fremont), has called the Dental Board’s refusal to adopt a proper Fact Sheet to advise dentists and their patients of the dangers of Mercury in dental fillings “the straw that broke the camel’s back” in terms of the board’s unwillingness to function in the public interest.

The Dental Board has been required by law (authored in 1992 by then-State Senator Diane Watson) to adopt a Dental Materials Fact Sheet about the risks and efficacies of dental materials. The principal dental material at issue is Mercury-based dental fillings. For nine years, the Board has refused to implement this law.

Increased media and consumer interest and concern about the dangers of Mercury resulted in the Dental Board finally addressing this issue. The Fact Sheet the Board had proposed to adopt has been determined by Governor Davis’ Department of Consumer Affairs to be “[legally] deficient in numerous ways... Legal staff has concluded that the statutory mandates have not been substantially complied with.”

The proposed Fact Sheet violates all of the following:

- the statute, because it continues to avoid describing the risks of Mercury amalgam;

- the bid specifications adopted by the Board in March 2000, because it does not address vulnerable sub-populations such as children and pregnant women;
- the Board resolutions of December 1999 on this subject, because it does not provide advice on determining consumer sensitivity to Mercury amalgam;
- the written promises the Board made to its licensees in its June 2000 newsletter, because it does not urge Proposition 65 warnings for Mercury in dental offices.

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