THE FLUORIDE ACTION NETWORK
http://www.fluoridealert.org or http://www.fluorideACTION.net
FAN CAMPAIGN Bulletin #259: The Douglass cancer cover up story explodes.

July 17, 2005

Dear All,

As I mentioned in the last FAN bulletin it was while we were protesting the ADA/CDC celebration of fluoridation in Chicago that the news about the Chester Douglass cover up of Bassin's thesis (indicating a relationship between fluoridation and osteosarcoma in young boys) exploded. It happened in three stages;

1) The story was picked up by the UK scientific journal The Scientist on July 11. This was the first scientific journal to cover the story.

2) The story was carried on page 3 of the July 13 edition of the Washington Post. This is considered to be one of the most important newspapers in the country because it provides breakfast reading for the nation's capital.

3) Then in a separate story - also on July 13 - an article by the legal writer for the Associated Press appeared on the AP wire service. Over the next few days this story has been carried on over 80 media outlets in at least 30 states.

Below I have reprinted these three stories along with a timeline of events since the Environmental Working Group first released the story about Elise Bassin's PhD thesis on June 6, 2005.

Was it covered in your area? If not, why not? Check with your local editors. This question is particularly pertinent if your city is involved in a debate over the issue, either because citizens are trying to get it out, or promoters are trying to put it in. Under these circumstances if the story was not covered the omission by the editors can only be considered biased or unprofessional.

Meanwhile, I urge all our readers to mobilize your troops to demand that your legislators and municipal officials end water fluoridation immediately. With every day that fluoridation continues millions of young boys (aged 6 through 8 years) drinking fluoridated water increase their chances of succumbing to osteosarcoma (a rare but frequently fatal bone cancer) by 700%. **How could any meager saving in tooth decay (if any exists at all, which is doubtful) possibly justify one child dying from osteosarcoma?**

If proponents come back with the fact that Bassin's thesis has not been published yet, then slap them with the fact that her research adviser Chester Douglass - a consultant for Colgate - has not been keen to allow the story to get out. He has misrepresented this thesis in public and to his funders. Remember: you do not have to lie about something (fluoridation) which is any good, but you have to go to all kinds of trouble to keep something afloat which is rotten to the core.

Paul Connett

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1) The Scientist article, July 11, 2005.

http://www.the-scientist.com/news/20050711/01

DAILY NEWS

Harvard dentist investigated

School launches probe after accusations that faculty member misrepresented fluoride-cancer study

By Alison McCook

The Harvard School of Dental Medicine announced last week that it is investigating a faculty member after the watchdog Environmental Working Group (EWG) accused him of misrepresenting a study by a former student that reported that fluoride in drinking water increases the risk of bone cancer in young boys.

According to the EWG, Chester Douglass, Harvard's chair of the Department of Oral Health Policy and Epidemiology, said in a report to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) that the still-unpublished study, by former student Elise Bassin, showed that there was no relationship between fluoride and bone cancer.

However, EWG's Mike Casey told *The Scientist* that a summary of Bassin's work, now available on the EWG Web site, showed exactly the opposite, suggesting that Douglass is "misrepresenting, quite badly, research that he signed off on." As to the researcher's motives for doing so, Casey noted that Douglass is the editor of a newsletter called the Colgate Oral Care Report, funded by Colgate-Palmolive, which makes fluoride-containing toothpaste.

Casey said that EWG has filed a complaint with the NIEHS and called Harvard to apprise the school of their actions. Both Douglass and Bassin declined to comment for this article.
A Harvard spokesperson told *The Scientist* that the school is assembling an inquiry committee to investigate the charges, and plans to work with the NIEHS. "The Harvard School of Dental Medicine takes all allegations of misconduct seriously and has a standard system for reviewing allegations of research impropriety," the spokesperson said.

Although Bassin's paper is not yet published, a summary on the EWG Web site says that the report showed a nearly 5-fold higher risk of osteosarcoma in boys who, at age 7, drank water containing 30% to 99% of the amount of fluoride recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). When boys drank water containing at least 100% of the recommended amount of fluoride, their risk jumped to more than seven times that of unexposed boys.

Casey said that the EWG learned about Bassin's report when they heard that members of a National Academy of Sciences panel discussing osteosarcoma and fluoride were having difficulty getting access to Bassin's research. The EWG looked into the matter further and found "stark contradictions" between Bassin's alleged results and Douglass' presentation of them, Casey noted.

For example, in a report to NIEHS, which gave Douglass money from 1992 to 1999 as part of the "Fluoride Exposure and Osteosarcoma" project, he writes that an "analysis carried out for an Orthopedic Surgery Research meeting reported an odds ratio of 1.2 to 1.4 between fluoride and osteosarcoma that was not significantly different from 1." One of the two references Douglass includes in the report is Bassin's 2001 thesis, which he approved, although it is not clear where any of the data points he cites are taken from.

According to Douglass' report, he and his colleagues found no significant link between fluoride and bone cancer when they examined patient records from orthopedic surgery departments across the United States, and matched cases to controls with different tumors and nontumor controls. To investigate exposure to fluoride, Douglass and his team used CDC fluoridation census data and direct information from regions where cases and controls lived.

Casey noted that the EWG recently released a review of scientific research, including Bassin's, on fluoride in drinking water that showed a "pretty clear link" between fluoride and osteosarcoma. Still, the EWG isn't "organizationally opposed" to fluoride, Casey said. "We're saying this is what the science says. People can draw their own conclusions."

Martin Mahoney of the Roswell Park Cancer Institute and State University of New York, Buffalo, has studied the effects of fluoride in drinking water and found no link between bone cancer and fluoridation. He reviewed the EWG site for *The Scientist* and said there is not enough information to make any conclusions about Bassin's research, nor Douglass' conduct. He questioned why Bassin's work had not yet been published, given that she completed it in 2001.

G.G. Steiner, of Steiner Laboratories in Kapolei, Hawaii, told *The Scientist* that he has reviewed every published paper to date on fluoride and cancer and has found no sign that fluoride increases the risk of bone cancer. "It's really a dead issue about fluoride and cancer in science," he said. Steiner, who sells fluoride for use during bone graft surgery, said he has even published research showing that cancer rates appear to decrease as fluoride levels in water increase, suggesting fluoride might actually protect against cancer.

Steiner added that many people are against adding fluoride to water because they don't like having something forced on them, and simply having a connection to Colgate doesn't make Douglass guilty of wrongdoing. "Just because of that, you can't make a leap that he's covering something up," he said.

Links for this article

Environmental Working Group http://www.ewg.org/issues/fluoride/20050627/index.php
Chester Douglass http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/faculty/ChesterDouglass.html
EWG, "New Science on Fluoride & Bone Cancer in Boys," June 5, 2005.
http://www.ewg.org/issues/fluoride/20050606/petition.php
Colgate Oral Care Report http://www.colgateprofessional.com/app/cop/repository/article-201/frameset.jsp?middle=ocrindex.html
C. Douglass, NIEHS Report
http://www.ewg.org/issues_content/fluoride/20050627/pdf/NIEHS_final_report.pdf
M.C. Mahoney et al., "Bone cancer incidence rates in New York State: time trends and fluoridated drinking water supplies," *Am J Public Health* 81:475-9, 1991. [PubMed Abstract]
Steiner Laboratories http://www.steinerlabs.com/index.htm
G.G. Steiner, "Cancer incidence rates and environmental factors: an ecological study," *J Environ Pathol Toxicol Oncol* 21(3):205-12, 2002. [PubMed Abstract]

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2) The Washington Post article, Page A3, July 13, 2005.
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/12/AR2005071201277_pf.html

Professor at Harvard Is Being Investigated

Fluoride-Cancer Link May Have Been Hidden

By Juliet Eilperin
Washington Post Staff Writer
Wednesday, July 13, 2005; A03

Federal investigators and Harvard University officials are probing whether a Harvard professor buried research suggesting a link between fluoridated tap water and bone cancer in adolescent boys.

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), which funded Chester Douglass's $1.3 million study, and the university are investigating why the Harvard School of Dental Medicine epidemiologist told federal officials he found no significant correlation between fluoridated water and osteosarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer. Douglass, who serves as editor in chief for the industry-funded Colgate Oral Care Report, supervised research for a 2001 doctoral thesis that concluded boys exposed to fluoridated water at a young age were more likely to get the cancer.

The Environmental Working Group, an advocacy organization, urged federal officials late last month to explore whether Douglass had skewed his 2004 report to the institute to play down possible risks associated with fluoridation.

The practice of fluoridating tap water -- which more than 170 million Americans drink -- has inspired controversy for years, but the majority of federal and state officials back it as a highly effective way to prevent tooth decay. The

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has ranked fluoridation as one of the top 10 health achievements of the 20th century, and numerous studies have shown that fluoridation prevents tooth decay. The National Cancer Institute states on its Web site: "Many studies, in both humans and animals, have shown no association between fluoridated water and risk for cancer."

Douglass reported last year that the odds of having osteosarcoma after drinking fluoridated water was "not statistically different" from the risk after drinking non-fluoridated water. But in 2001, Douglass's doctoral student, Elise Bassin, published a thesis using his data that concluded: "Among males, exposure to fluoride at or above the target level was associated with an increased risk of developing osteosarcoma. The association was most apparent between ages 5-10, with a peak at six to eight years of age."

Bassin's thesis work is considered the most rigorous human study to date on a possible connection between fluoridation and osteosarcoma, a rare but lethal form of cancer that affects males nearly twice as often as females. Patients with the cancer live an average of three years after diagnosis. In 1990, an animal study by the National Toxicology Program found "equivocal evidence" of a link between fluoridated water and cancer in male rats. And more than a decade ago, a New Jersey Department of Health survey found that young males in fluoridated communities had a higher rate of osteosarcoma than those in non-fluoridated communities.

"Fluoride safety is a major public health issue, and a Harvard professor potentially falsifying public research results has huge public health implications," said Richard Wiles, senior vice president of the Environmental Working Group. He added that Douglass's role in editing a newsletter funded by Colgate-Palmolive Co. "creates the appearance of a conflict of interest."

Douglass, who has taught at Harvard since 1978 and has edited the Colgate quarterly since 1997, referred inquires to the university's press office. Harvard Medical School spokesman John Lacey said the school "takes all allegations of misconduct seriously and has a standard system for reviewing allegations of research impropriety. The school is assembling an inquiry committee to review the questions raised concerning the reporting of this work."

Douglass has not edited for the newsletter articles on the possible connection between fluoridation and cancer and has not testified publicly on the issue, Lacey added.

The institute issued a statement similar to Harvard's, saying the NIEHS "takes allegations of misconduct very seriously" and is reviewing the matter.

Bassin could not be reached.

Some public health experts, including Richard Clapp, an expert in the environmental causes of cancer at Boston University's School of Public Health, think Bassin's study

should prompt additional research. Researchers suspect a possible connection because half of ingested fluoride is deposited in bones, and fluoride stimulates growth in the end of bones, where osteosarcoma occurs. The Environmental Protection Agency has commissioned a National Academy of Sciences study to examine the safety of fluoridation. A report is due next year.

"It's important, and it needs to be followed up," Clapp said of Bassin's work. "There's a legitimate biological rationale for focusing on young boys."

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3) THE ASSOCIATED PRESS STORY carried by over 80 media outlets.

As it appeared in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Wednesday, July 13, 2005

http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/apscience_story.asp?category=1500&slug=Harvard%20Fluoride%20Flap

Harvard professor probed in fluoride flap

By DENISE LAVOIE
AP LEGAL AFFAIRS WRITER

BOSTON -- Harvard University is investigating an allegation that a dentistry professor downplayed research showing an increased risk of bone cancer for boys who drink fluoridated tap water.

Chester Douglass, who heads Harvard's Department of Oral Health Policy and Epidemiology, received a $1.3 million

grant in 1992 from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to conduct a study of fluoride exposure and osteosarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer.

Douglass' 1992-1999 study found that the odds of having osteosarcoma after drinking fluoridated water were "not statistically different" from those who drank non-fluoridated water.

But Elise Bassin, a doctoral student who Douglass supervised, reported in her 2001 thesis that boys who drink fluoridated water appear to have an increased risk of developing the bone cancer. Her findings were based on some of the same people used in Douglass' study.

The Environmental Working Group, an advocacy group based in Washington, D.C., filed an ethics complaint against Douglass last month after discovering that Douglass cited Bassin's research in his final grant report. In it, he said her work supported his claim that there was no significant risk from fluoridated water, even though Bassin had found a strong link between fluoride levels in tap water and an increased osteosarcoma risk for boys.

Richard Wiles, senior vice president of the environmental group, also said there is a conflict of interest between Douglass' research and his position as editor-in-chief of The Colgate Oral Health Report, a quarterly newsletter funded by Colgate-Palmolive Co., which makes fluoridated toothpaste.

"It's safe to say that he appears to be one of the leading members of the fluoride apologists group of scientists," Wiles said. "Clearly, the fluoride-using industry, the dental industry, has an interest in the image of fluoride as being a healthy, good thing."

A woman who answered the phone on Wednesday at Douglass' office said he was on vacation and unavailable for comment.

Harvard Medical School spokesman John Lacey said the school will work with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to review Douglass' research.

"The Harvard School of Dental Medicine takes all allegations of misconduct seriously and has a standard system for reviewing allegations of research impropriety. The school is assembling an inquiry committee to review the questions raised concerning the reporting of this work," the school said in a statement.

Christine Bruske, a spokeswoman for NIEHS, said the institute is reviewing the letter it received from the Environmental Working Group alleging "scientific misconduct" by Douglass.

Bassin declined to comment when reached at her home Wednesday.

Her thesis has not yet been published and is not available to the public. The environmental group, which obtained Bassin's thesis, cited excerpts in a letter to sent to Douglass last month.

"Among males, exposure to fluoride at or above the target level was associated with an increased risk of developing osteosarcoma," Bassin wrote. "The association was most apparent between ages 5-10 with a peak at 6 to 8 years of age."

Douglass' study looked at men and woman of all different ages who drank fluoridated tap water. Bassin looked at the boys and girls used in Douglass' study and verified fluoride levels in tap water for each year of the child's life.

"She found the strongest association ever between fluoridated tape water and bone cancer among boys," said Wiles.

Fluoridation of tap water in the United States began in the 1950s and was seen as an effective way to fight tooth decay.

Controversy over the practice began to grow in the 1970s after a study found a high incident in bone structure defects in Newburgh, N.Y., one of the first communities in the country to fluoridate its water, when compared with the rate in the non-fluoridated town of Kingston, N.Y.

A study completed in 1991 by the U.S. Public Health

Service found that the rates of osteosarcoma were significantly higher among males under 20 who lived in fluoridated communities than in communities with non-fluoridated water.

Several other major studies have reached the opposite conclusion, including a 1995 study by the New York State Department of Health that found fluoride exposure does not increase the risk for childhood osteosarcoma.

Wiles said the Environmental Working Group is not opposed to fluoridated toothpaste because most of the fluoride in toothpaste has contact with the teeth and is not ingested. He said when fluoride is ingested through tap water, it can stimulate growth at the end of bones, where osteosarcoma occurs.

"I think the industry realizes that the public may not make the distinction," Wiles said. If fluoride gets a big black eye in tap water then the public is going to wonder about this fluoride in my toothpaste."

Editor's Note: Denise Lavoie is a Boston-based reporter covering the courts and legal issues. She can be reached at dlavoie@ap.org

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4) **TIMELINE** ON THE BASSIN THESIS and the DOUGLASS COVER UP stories

BASSIN THESIS

The Environmental Working Group releases story June 6, 2005. Subject: EWG has petitioned the National Toxicology program (NTP) to "Evaluate the Cancer-Causing Potential Of Fluoride in Tap Water" in the light of Bassin's thesis.

http://ewg.org/issues/fluoride/20050606/index.php

1) The Observer (UK), June 12, 2005.

Bob Woffinden picks up the ewg report and interviews Bassin and Douglass.

http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,6903,1504672,00.html

2) Taipei Times, June 13, 2005 . Reprints Observer piece.

3) Irish Independent, Ireland, June 13, 2005.

Irish Dentists Opposed to Fluoridation pick up the news of the Bassin thesis and call for an immediate halt to fluoridation in Ireland.

http://www.fluoridealert.org/news/2288.html

4) Irish Times, Ireland, June 15, 2005

http://www.fluoridealert.org/news/2294.html

The Environmental Working Group (ewg) calls for an investigation of Douglass, claiming that he had misrepresented the results of his government financed study.

http://ewg.org/issues/fluoride/20050627/index.php

5) Boston Herald, MA, June 28, 2005 (picked up by UPI).

The first paper to pick up the ewg's claim that Douglass misrepresented Bassin's study

http://news.bostonherald.com/localRegional/view.bg?articleid=91857

6) Washington Times, DC, June 28, 2005.

The WT reprints the Boston Herald report distributed by UPI.

7) Harvard Crimson, Boston, MA, July 1, 2005.

The Harvard Crimson announces that Harvard University will be investigating Douglass's behavior

http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=508199

8) Scientist, UK, July 11, 2005.

This UK publication is the first scientific journal to pick up the Bassin-Douglass story.

http://www.the-scientist.com/news/20050711/01

9) Washington Post, July 12, 2005

This page 3 story is the major breakthrough in the US media - right under the noses of decision makers in Washington, DC.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/12/AR2005071201277.html

10) Associated Press, July 13, 2005

In a separate story from AP legal reporter Denise Lavoie the story is set to go national.

http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/apscience_story.asp?category=1500&slug=Harvard%20Fluoride%20Flap

Since July 13, the AP story has been carried by media outlets in at least 33 states and DC: AL, AK, AZ, CA, CO, DC, FL, GA, KN, KS, IL, IN, LA, MA, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, ND, NJ, NY, OH, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, and WA.

Also MSNBC; Forbes magazine; MSN money; 70online.com; SierraTimes.com; Wired News