



July 8, 2016

Madeline Drexler
Editor, *Harvard School of Public Health Magazine*
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
Office for External Relations
90 Smith Street, Fourth Floor
Boston, MA 02120

RE: Response to "Is Fluoridated Drinking Water Safe?": Dental Students' Call to Action

Dear Ms. Drexler:

As members of the Harvard School of Dental Medicine (HSDM), Class of 2018, we stand in support with the previous letters submitted by the following authors refuting the recent publication in the *Harvard Public Health* magazine Spring 2016 issue entitled, "Is Fluoridated Drinking Water Safe?":

- Kathleen T. O'Loughlin, D.M.D., M.P.H., Executive Director American Dental Association
- Richard W. Valachovic, D.M.D., M.P.H., Sc.M., President and CEO American Dental Education Association
- Christopher H. Fox, D.M.D., Sc.M., D.M.Sc., Executive Director American Association for Dental Research
- Carol Gomez Summerhays, D.D.S., President American Dental Association
- Benard P. Dreyer, MD, FAAP, President American Academy of Pediatrics
- Frances Kim, DDS, MPH, DrPH, President AAPHD
- Scott L. Tomar, DMD, MPH, DrPH, Chair APHA Oral Health Section
- Bruce Donoff, DMD, MD, President AAPHD, Chair APHA Oral Health Section, Dean Harvard School of Dental Medicine

We find concern with the following frank inaccuracies and misleading concepts in the article:

- Misleading Charts (re: Corrected June 15, 2016 showing Chile's and Australia's use of fluoridated water).
- Based on solitary, questionable work¹⁻³, previously refuted⁴⁻⁷.
- Misleading conclusions of Cochrane Collaboration.
- Lack of expert oral health consultation.
- Neglect to mention previous HMS, HSPH, and HSDM support for water fluoridation.

We support previous calls for the full retraction of this article and the promotion of a more accurate “State of the Science” from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Evidence-based discussions pertaining to fluoride should include the points listed below:

- Fluoride is naturally found in water and many of the foods we eat⁸.
- There is agreement amongst oral health experts and over 100 international organizations on the safety and efficacy of fluoridation⁹.
- Community-based water fluoridation has been implemented in the United States for over 70 years, without any known negative health effects occurring at recommended levels¹⁰⁻¹³.
- Water fluoridation refers to the control of fluoride concentration in water, which can mean both raising or lowering healthy levels to 0.7ppm depending on the water source. Over 214 million Americans, 74.7 percent of the U.S. population, live in communities which supply fluoridated water¹⁴.
- For every \$1 spent on water fluoridation there is a savings in treatment costs of ~\$38 based on community size, costs, and different study methodologies^{15,16}.
- Fluoride is highly effective in both preventing and remineralizing active caries¹⁷⁻¹⁹.

Our Call for Action

The oral health professions are responsible for promoting the oral health and well-being of their communities. Perhaps the most effective and well understood manner in which this can be achieved is through supporting community-based water fluoridation, clinical fluoride applications, and home-based fluoride therapies. We call upon fellow dental students to affirm, promote, and advance the following:

- Guarding against harmful practices and misconceptions on fluoride.
- Promotion of evidence-based dentistry and preventive care.
- Promotion of evidence-based fluoride knowledge and practices in dentistry and the broader health, public health, and lay communities.
- Discussion about the benefits of fluoride in prevention of caries, pain, and unnecessary financial costs.
- Collaboration with oral health colleagues to promote strong relationships, healthy communities, and optimal patient care.
- Collaboration with and education of other health-professional students and programs about oral health prevention and promotion.
- Engagement in research, evaluation, and discussion of fluoridation practices for optimal oral health.

Dental schools provide the foundation of knowledge for future oral health professionals and are responsible for training future providers to communicate effectively with patients about best oral health care practices. As such, dental schools across the country and internationally are uniquely responsible for teaching students the skills to discuss and translate evidence-based medicine pertaining to the beneficial effects of fluoride in oral health. We call upon all dental schools and dental students to affirm, promote, and advance the following:

- Discussion about oral health prevention and education between future oral health providers and patients.

- Curriculum competencies that educate graduating dentists on effective strategies to discuss fluoride safety and efficacy.
- Advocacy for the American Dental Education Association (ADEA), American Dental Association (ADA), American Student Dental Association (ASDA) and other organized dentistry groups to support evidence-based, pro-fluoridation policies.
- Continued support for research and evaluation of evolving evidence for the safety of fluoridation practices for optimal overall health outcomes.

Supported by,



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Bruce Donoff, DMD, MD
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Dean, Harvard School of Dental Medicine



Vice President, Student Council
Harvard School of Dental Medicine
Harvard Medical School

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