



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

AUG 29 2005

OFFICE OF
WATER

Mr. Dwight A. Welch
President
NTEU Chapter 280
EPA Headquarters
Washington, DC 20460

Mr. J. William Hirzy
Vice-President
NTEU Chapter 280
EPA Headquarters
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Welch and Mr. Hirzy:

Thank you for your letter dated August 5, 2005, to Administrator Stephen L. Johnson, concerning the findings reported in Dr. Elise Beth Bassin's thesis entitled, "Association Between Fluoride in Drinking Water During Growth and Development and the Incidence of Osteosarcoma for Children and Adolescents" (April 2001) while she was a student at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is aware of this work and agrees with you that it must be considered as part of the ongoing Agency review of the Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG) for Fluoride.

As you are aware, EPA has a contract with the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) for a review of health effects and exposure studies published since their last review of health effects of fluoride in 1993. EPA is expecting completion of the NAS review effort in February 2006. Harvard University has made portions of Dr. Bassin's thesis available to the NAS, and it is part of their literature reviewed. Thus, it is important that the NAS review be completed before EPA makes any regulatory decisions based on health effects of fluoride. Harvard University has made portions of Dr. Bassin's thesis available to the NAS, and it is part of their literature reviewed.

It is noteworthy that Dr. Bassin's thesis has never been published or subjected to peer review. The important chapter on "Problems in the Exposure Assessment of Fluoride Levels in Drinking Water" was not included with your letter and is required for any dose-response evaluation. According to the Agency's Information Quality Guidelines, scientific information must undergo independent peer review before being considered for Agency decision making.

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EPA appreciates your concern for public welfare. I would like to reassure you that the Agency's role is ensuring the safety of public drinking water supplies. We are certain that the measures we have already in place, including working through NAS in reviewing the fluoride data, will ensure that sound science underlies all regulatory actions related to fluoride.

If you have any further questions, please contact me at (202) 566-1117 or Joyce Donohue, at (202) 566-1098.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Edward V. Ohanian".

Edward V. Ohanian, Ph.D., Director
Health and Ecological Criteria Division