

The Trumbull Times

Thursday, January 6, 2011

Opinion

Letters to the Editor

Paranoia, not facts, drives dental mercury debate

To the Editor:

The environmental impact of mercury continues to be a topic of discussion. The fear and paranoia of mercury, possibly affecting both personal health and the environment, often drives the debate, rather than sound science.

In this case, the fear mongering is based on the fact that an ingredient in dental amalgam is mercury.

Yes, amalgam contains mercury, but the critical point missing from the *Trumbull Times* article, "London joins lawmakers demanding mercury filling ban," is that when the mercury is combined with

other metals — generally silver, copper, tin and zinc — it forms a safe, stable alloy which has entirely different physical and chemical properties than mercury by itself.

One can find other examples. Salt has its own poisonous elements — chlorine and sodium — but when combined, produce one of our most basic seasonings. Dentists have used amalgam for generations, safely and effectively, to treat dental decay in millions of Americans.

Major organizations entrusted with protecting the public's health have reviewed a veritable mountain of scientific

evidence and concluded that amalgam is a safe, effective material to treat cavities.

Regarding the environment, it's important to understand the minimal impact of amalgam. According to the U.S. EPA, less than 1% of mercury released into the environment comes from dentistry. Under Connecticut law, dentists already are capturing up to 99% of waste amalgam in their offices, preventing its release while the vast majority of environmental mercury emissions come from minimally regulated coal-fired power plants.

The dentists of Connecticut

are well-educated professionals, dedicated to the oral health of their patients. Dental amalgam has an established record of safety and has been used to restore the teeth of more than 100 million Americans.

We understand the public's concern; however, the Connecticut State Dental Association (CSDA) bases its position on science-based evidence rather than groundless fear and mere emotion.

Jon Davis, president
CSDA