

OPINION

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Taking a principled stance on water fluoridation

GUEST OPINION

By Jeff Irish, David Graves
and Rick North

The latest fluoridation controversy is over the city moving forward with a cost analysis. Although initially funded by Delta Dental's Arcora Foundation, the city must pay for it if it decides not to fluoridate. The current positions:

Green light: Spokane City Council President Breann Beggs – Full speed ahead

Yellow light: Mayor Nadine Woodward – Not so fast

Red light: Safe Water Spokane – End this – now

Financial considerations are important but pale in comparison to the human health costs – and the democratic process itself.

In a healthy democracy, all points of view are welcomed. But the Spokane City Council allowed fluoridation supporters two full study sessions and denied Safe Water Spokane's repeated requests for equal time. The city's website link "City Council Facts and FAQ" goes

directly to an American Dental Association document supporting the practice. The information sources were biased from the start, tainting the Sept. 14 vote to sign the strings-attached contract. It even requires the city to get Arcora's permission before saying anything about fluoridation, cementing the one-sided communication flow.

To level the playing field, Safe Water Spokane invited council members to watch our Zoom forum (safewaterspokane.org/forum) four days before the vote. It featured top professionals from all over the country and reserved time for questions. Only Michael Cathcart, who would be the lone vote against the contract, attended.

Here's a sample of what was missed:

Scientist Chris Neurath's analysis of the 2020 National Toxicology Program draft report, which declared "fluoride is presumed to be a cognitive neurodevelopmental hazard to humans," i.e., causes brain damage to fetuses and infants, especially lowered IQs. Out of 149 human studies, NTP identified 29 as the high-

est quality. Of those, 27 found significant adverse effects, and of those, 10 at levels in fluoridated water.

Attorney Michael Connett reviewed the federal lawsuit against the EPA, which produced several revelations. The CDC admitted there is no known effectiveness of fluoride in fetuses or infants and no known safe dose of fluoride. The EPA admitted that it agreed with the plaintiffs on the four strongest studies ever done, all funded by the National Institutes of Health and all finding significantly lowered IQs or higher ADHD rates at fluoridated water levels. The court is expected to rule by next spring on whether fluoridation is an unreasonable health risk, which will have nationwide ramifications.

Seattle resident Julie Simms suffered for years with almost daily migraine headaches. She tried everything for relief – drugs, special diets, acupuncture – all to no avail. Then, in 2013, upon a friend's suggestion, she stopped drinking fluoridated water. Three days later, the headaches stopped, changing her

entire life. Her doctor agrees that she must avoid fluoride. Hypersensitivity to fluoride, which includes a variety of harmful conditions, affects about 1% of the population – putting over 2,000 Spokane residents at risk.

Three weeks after the Council's vote, Environmental Health News published an op-ed entitled "It is time to protect kids' developing brains from fluoride," citing the ever-increasing high-quality studies showing fluoridated water can significantly lower IQs in children. The authors were nationally-renowned scientists: Linda Birnbaum, former director of the National Toxicology Program; Bruce Lanphear, whose landmark studies convinced the EPA there are no safe levels of lead; and Christine Till, co-author of last year's highly acclaimed IQ study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics.

Fluoridation threatens everyone, but especially low-income families, who can't afford bottled water or expensive filters to avoid fluoridated water to protect their health. They have no choice.

Everyone wants better dental health. But while 99% of fluoridated water goes down the drain – a complete waste of taxpayers' money – even the 1% that's consumed is minimally effective, if at all. The questionably high estimate of a 25% reduction is less than one cavity per child in permanent teeth, and the Cochrane Collaboration, the gold standard of measuring effectiveness, found no evidence of cavity prevention in adults.

The overwhelming weight of evidence makes clear that fluoridation's "safe and effective" sound bite is demonstrably false. The first step to sound decision-making is seeing this evidence. The second is being open to it. The third is acting on it.

Fluoridation is wrong – medically, financially and ethically. Please, stop this – now.

Jeff Irish is the volunteer chair of Safe Water Spokane, a citizens group opposing fluoridation. (safewaterspokane.org) David Graves, ND, is a practicing physician in Spokane. Rick North, now retired, is the former CEO of the Oregon American Cancer Society.