

NFIS Advisory: “Does Delayed Tooth Eruption Negate the Effectiveness of Water Fluoridation”

Overview

This document seems more of a personal attack on Dr Connett than an objective scientific “advisory”. This is hardly surprising, given NFIS’ preoccupation with countering Dr Connett’s 2011 speaking tour of NZ, and the fact that it was created specifically to counteract FANNZ’ effectiveness in opposing the Ministry of Health’s fluoridation agenda.

The report is filled with misinformation and mischaracterization of what Dr Connett said. Based on the publication date of March 2011, one can also deduce that Spencer’s announcement that the Queensland data was an error only occurred after the publication of that data in *Process and Control Engineering*. Spencer’s announcement occurred while Dr Connett was making his presentations in New Zealand. Therefore, Spencer and ARCPOH should take at least as much blame as Dr Connett for propagating this error (if it is an error).

As far as their other criticisms of Dr Connett’s comments on delayed eruption, they are based on half-truths and overly strict interpretations. The real bottom line is that very few studies have ever considered delayed eruption, just as the York Review pointed out. This NFIS critique is hardly sufficient to dismiss the concerns of the York Review.

They point out the weaknesses in the handful of studies which do provide evidence of a delay, and these are valid criticisms. But then they wholeheartedly endorse the single recent study (LeRoy) which expressly looked for delay and claimed it only found a minor delay which could not account for the differences in decay.

Analysis

NFIS incorrectly states that the idea of delayed tooth eruption is a new one, introduced by Dr Connett. In fact it was first reported by Feltman and Kosel in 1961, based on a 14 year study.

NFIS states:

direct relevance to trying to assess the issue. The claimed association is at odds with the published literature which indicates minimal variation in eruption time of permanent teeth by exposure to fluoride. A rational explanation exists for the minimal variations that have been reported based on the relationship between fluoride exposure, caries experience in the primary teeth and emergence timing for the permanent teeth.

In fact there is little published literature on delayed eruption, and that which exists suggests it is a real phenomenon. Perhaps of note is that those denying the phenomenon have had over 60 years to disprove it, yet have never attempted to do so. One has to ask why.

The Advisory goes on to state:

In addition, information on the effect of water fluoridation on adult oral health, when any potential effect from delayed tooth eruption would have disappeared, continue to show a benefit from water fluoridation both in international and in New Zealand data.

The following references are undoubtedly those relied on:

Griffin SO, Regnier E, Griffin PM and Huntley V. Effectiveness of fluoride in preventing caries in adults. *Journal of Dental Research* 2007; 85: 410-415.

Ministry of Health. 2010. *Our Oral Health: Key findings of the 2009 New Zealand Oral Health Survey*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

As we have shown elsewhere, Griffin does not establish benefit to adults, and the NZ Oral Health Survey conducted no research on this subject, so cannot prove the claim made by the NFIS.

Komarek

The Advisory states:

However, they did not assess in the study, the impact of water fluoridation. They were measuring, using a number of proxy models, the relationship to “fluoride intake”.

Of course, water fluoridation is a major contributor to fluoride intake. It doubles the rate of dental fluorosis – the proxy used by Komarek for fluoride exposure. So NFIS’ statement is deliberately misleading. Komarek found a 1 year delay in eruption, and that when this was adjusted for, there was no difference in tooth decay rates.

Australian data

The Advisory states:

On 14 April 2011 Professor Spencer provided further information about the data and advised:

“The claimed association is based upon an analysis of 2003-04 data that had an error. ARCPOH found a syntax error in the software program used to read the optical mark read forms for Queensland in the years 2003 and 2004.

In fact a programme with a syntax error does not run incorrectly – it does not run at all. If it has to be compiled before being run, which is typical of ARCPOH’s programmes, it will not even compile. So this explanation is extremely suspect.

ARCPOH refused to explain their data for 10 months. Yet within 48 hours of it being made public, they “found” this alleged error. To date they have not released any data for independent analysis, so that their current claims can be verified or refuted. They are just claims – not established fact, contrary to what NFIS would have us believe.