

## Fluoride fighters should be saving us from so many other things

**HEIDI ENGELHARDT**

I wish to congratulate the anti-fluoride group on their campaign to end the 50-year practice of fluoridating Waterloo's drinking water. There vigorous efforts resulted in a clear answer from the citizens of Waterloo, with 50.3 per cent voting to discontinue the addition of this micronutrient to the water supply. This decision will have little or no impact if one assumes that every child in Waterloo grows up with excellent oral hygiene and a good dental plan. For those fortunate to live in areas supplied by wells rich in natural fluoride, this will also be a non-issue.

After this victory, the anti-fluoride faction can now dedicate their time to saving us from other toxins and unwanted "medications" being slipped into our food chain. As they are no doubt aware, it is law in Canada that all milk be supplemented with Vitamin D. As we were told in the anti-fluoride campaign, people should be able to choose the nutrients they consume rather than having them forced upon them. In this case, they should be particularly concerned about children, who often consume large amounts of milk products.

In launching the anti-vitamin D campaign, they would be advised to ignore the fact that rickets due to vitamin D deficiency has all but disappeared in this country.

Similarly, as a result of mandatory addition of iodine to table salt, the iodine deficiencies that earned this region the nickname the "goitre belt" have become historical lore. Worldwide, iodine deficiency affects about two billion people and is the leading preventable cause of mental retardation, but surely this does not justify sneaking iodine into our salt shakers.

And by law, all margarines are supplemented with Vitamins A and D. It is well established that excess Vitamin A can cause cancer. Clearly, this is a dangerous practice that must be stopped.

Also by Canadian law, infant formula must be supplemented with numerous macro- and micronutrients, including copper, chromium, iron, molybdenum, selenium and zinc. Given the narrow safety margin between effective and toxic quantities of these essential trace minerals, Waterloo mothers who, by necessity or choice, are feeding formula, would no doubt relish the opportunity to make their own decisions on what levels their babies should be consuming.

Finally, the issue of mandatory supplementation of flour should not go unchallenged. Canadian law dictates that all flour be supplemented with folic acid (a synthetic precursor of vitamin B9 or folacin). Supplementary folic acid is highly recommended for women before and during pregnancy. But does this justify exposing every man, woman and child to this chemical? In preparing the anti-folate campaign, be sure to find alternative explanations for the declines in neural tube defects (spina bifida, anencephaly), congenital heart defects and neuroblastoma (a childhood cancer) since mandatory folic acid supplementation began in Canada in 1997.

The 41 per cent of eligible voters that voiced their opinion have spoken: Waterloo does not want scientists and health care professionals advising government on preventive health policy.

Speaking personally, I am glad that my children are past their "cavity-prone" years.

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