

Campaign for Mercury-Free Dentistry Celebrates Enormous Successes

By Dr. Mercola

Today we begin the third [Mercury](#)-free Dentistry Week. We set aside an entire week for three reasons.

1. *First, we build awareness of this stark fact: Dental amalgam is 50 percent mercury.*

Through misleading marketing to the public and through gagging dentists who tried to speak the truth via its control over dental boards, the American Dental Association (ADA) convinced most consumers and parents that dental amalgams are “silver fillings.” But amalgam has almost twice as much mercury as silver. What a public deception!

We honor the world’s mercury-free dentists: those who refuse to put in mercury fillings, those who stand up to the American Dental Association, those who tell you the truth -- the whole truth -- when you are in the dental chair.

2. *Second, we celebrate the enormous successes of the past year by the Campaign for Mercury-Free Dentistry.*

In January in Geneva, at its 5th and final negotiation session, delegates from over 140 nations agreed to a treaty that will address mercury. Amalgam is part of that treaty – every nation must take concrete steps to phase down its use, and a mechanism exists to petition for a full world phase-out.

The treaty is having a direct impact in the United States. On Easter Sunday, the largest newspaper in the Midwest, the Chicago Tribune, published a story with this headline excerpt: “Momentum is building to phase out dental amalgam.”

Giving credit where it is due, we today wish to spotlight the extraordinary work of The Campaign for Mercury-Free Dentistry -- the project organized and led by Charlie Brown of Consumers for Dental Choice.

3. *Third, we chart the roadmap to victory.*

The treaty has a road map for how to phase down amalgam – switch dental school curriculum to composites as the primary material; re-train dentists, change insurance to prefer alternatives, develop a national plan to reduce amalgam use, etc.

The Campaign for Mercury-Free Dentistry is not waiting for this treaty to be formally signed and ratified; from January on, Charlie and his team hit the ground running, on every continent.

Fight for Mercury-Free Dentistry Is Now International

Charlie's masterful plan started with defeating the notorious amalgam gag rule – virtually ending the state licensing board threats to shut down dentists who spoke out. Then his US team worked to implement consumer disclosure laws at the state level, before doing the now-famous lawsuit that compelled action by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

From there, the cause went international. At the mercury treaty negotiations, Charlie led a talented coalition of environmentalists, dentists, scientists, physicians, attorneys, and other experts from 16 nations to victory at the treaty talks. Now, they are in the field -- in America, Asia, Europe, and Africa -- working to get the treaty's goals implemented.

Donate Now to Double Your Impact!

This week, we will match your gift to Consumers for Dental Choice. The Campaign for Mercury-Free Dentistry – known in our nation as Consumers for Dental Choice, known internationally as the World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry -- spearheaded a remarkable campaign that has moved mercury-free dentistry from the fringe to the mainstream. No longer are mercury-free dentists outcasts in their communities; they are the pioneers – and often the heroes.

So if you donate to Consumers for Dental Choice this week (by September 21), the Natural Health Research Foundation (which I founded) will match, dollar-for-dollar, what you give.

Indeed, we up the ante in 2013. In 2012 we matched up to \$50,000 raised. This year, we raise the bar by 50 percent -- matching up to \$75,000 raised. Why? The stakes are truly that big.

Why Public Awareness Counts So Much

Mercury is a neurotoxin, the most toxic and the most volatile of the heavy metals. What parent for his or her child, or what pregnant woman, would choose a “mercury filling”? Now you see why the ADA, for years the holder of patents on amalgam (since expired), did not want this truth known – why they had promotional brochures for so-called “silver fillings.”

It's time for all of us to tell our families, neighbors, and colleagues:

- “Silver” amalgam fillings are really mercury fillings.
- Alternatives are available, affordable, and effective.
- Amalgam is a primitive, polluting, pre-Civil War product which cracks good teeth.

Amalgam should be rejected by every man, woman, and child in a dentist chair. You can learn this directly from a mercury-free dentist. It was my privilege a few months ago to speak to the International Academy of Biological Dentistry & Medicine, www.iabdm.org; at that event too, the Academy was nice enough to organize a coffee for me, humorously called “joe with Joe.”

2013 Is a Year of Great Celebration—Let Me Recount the Ways!

1. **Amalgam is in the mercury treaty.** It was a three-year campaign, with five negotiations sessions with all the nations; fifteen regional sessions, dozens of papers and reports, and hundreds of meetings with individual governments. The Campaign for Mercury-Free Dentistry was there for us, each step of the way.

Repeatedly, Charlie and his team outwitted the World Dental Federation (the ADA at the world level). The World Dental Federation brought only white men from North America and Europe; Charlie countered with a team of women and men from every race and continent. The ADA white guys spoke English, while Charlie's team's fluency extended to more than 20 languages. Charlie's team organized luncheons to explain mercury-free dentistry; the nonplussed World Dental Federation had no choice but to attend, and watch!

2. **Amalgam is the *only* mercury-added product in the treaty with a road map for *how* to phase down its use.** Nations have specific guidance on what measures can be taken to transition to mercury-free alternatives. So we don't wait on target phase-out dates for other products that are between 7 and 12 years off. For amalgam, we begin now! Now is the time to begin the phase-out of amalgam!
3. **Being defeated at the treaty aboard, the ADA is suffering a string of defeats at home.** America's TV educator on medicine, Dr. Oz, [ran a great program](#) that explained the health, environmental, and technical problems with amalgam. Many of you sent him compliments, but the ADA was irate. Unable to persuade Dr. Oz to retract a single word, the ADA was humiliated into [withdrawing their affiliation](#) with Sharecare, a consumer website co-founded by Dr. Oz.

The ADA tried to get the American Public Health Association (APHA) to endorse the ongoing use of amalgam. After winning the first round before the treaty was completed, the ADA was rebuffed once APHA took a full look at the issue. For organized dentistry, solidarity in favor of amalgam has disintegrated. Until now a stalwart for amalgam, the *British Dental Journal* recently published an article calling on dentists to recognize that amalgam is finished and to embrace composite.

4. **A worldwide campaign has begun to get amalgam manufacturers to switch -- and they are getting the message.** Dentsply, based in York, PA, is being challenged to switch to alternatives, both via a grassroots campaign right there in Pennsylvania,¹ and a call from environmental and social justice organizations on six continents not to dump amalgam in developing nations.

The Campaign for Mercury-Free Dentistry has launched a [petition drive](#).² It has over 8,000 names and is aiming to reach 10,000 -- this week. It's your decision whether to sign, but the common rule in these drives is... the more signatures, the more effective.

Signaling they may be throwing in the towel, European dental materials manufacturers devoted an entire day of its recent two-conference to the topic, "The Demise of Amalgam Use and Development of Enhanced Materials to Advance Novel Dentistry."³

5. **The Campaign for Mercury-Free Dentistry is a potent force on all six continents.** The World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry elected, and kept, Charlie as its president. In that role he has

brought together a powerhouse of talent – ten regional vice presidents plus an array of chapter leaders -- people who are scientists, dentists, environmentalists, a journalist, a physician, professors, and attorneys.

Governments are seeking advice from Consumers for Dental Choice on how to end amalgam. Here's a good example: MERCOSUR is the South American regional organization analogous to the European Union. In 2013, Charlie Brown was the first person from civil society ever invited to address the MERCOSUR Environmental Ministers – which he did in Montevideo, Uruguay, in May.

Working closely with Michael Bender of the Mercury Policy Project and Elena Lymberidi-Settimo of the European Environmental Bureau, the Campaign for Mercury-Free Dentistry has laid the groundwork to win in Europe. With the European Union weighing a phase-out of amalgam on a strict timetable, they organized a team that went to the European Parliament in Brussels.

Your Donation Makes a BIG Difference

We believe in inspiring progress -- and nowhere is the progress more evident than the work of Consumers for Dental Choice and its Campaign for Mercury-Free Dentistry. So consider donating your funds where you know it will get results. We match all gifts given during Mercury-Free Dentistry Week -- every single dollar up to \$75,000 raised.

People ask: Why is Consumers for Dental Choice succeeding when earlier attempts and other strategies against amalgam failed? Having seen Charlie Brown's work up close for the past two years, I can say that he runs clearly a lean, effective, and efficient organization; your dollars go a long way with Consumers for Dental Choice. But there is another reason: Consumers for Dental Choice takes the Holistic Approach to Advocacy. You wouldn't go to traditional dentist who uses mercury amalgam fillings. So why would you go to a traditional activist to fight for mercury-free dentistry? That's why so many people, including myself, support Consumers for Dental Choice's holistic approach to advocacy.

"We've worked with mercury-free dentists and other holistic health professionals from the very beginning," says Charlie Brown, executive director and national counsel of Consumers for Dental Choice. *"And we've learned a lot from them that we then carry back to our work: campaigning for mercury-free dentistry."*

How does it work? Here are three basic principles that every holistic health care professional applies to heal patients... and that Consumers for Dental Choice puts into action for mercury-free dentistry.

Principle #1: Oral Health and Overall Health Are Linked

Holistic dentists, also called biological dentists, view your teeth and gums as an integrated part of your entire body, meaning that oral health problems can be linked to overall health problems

and vice versa. For example, they know that putting a toxin, like the mercury in amalgam fillings, into your teeth can be harmful to your overall health.

Like holistic dentists, Consumers for Dental Choice knows that the problems with amalgam fillings go far beyond the tooth, affecting your overall health and well-being in many ways... some more well-known than others. If you are a regular reader, you know amalgam releases mercury – a neurotoxin and reproductive toxin – into your body. But did you know about these other problems caused by the amalgam in your teeth?

- Environment: Amalgam pollutes 1) water via dental clinic releases and human waste; 2) air via cremation, dental clinic emissions, sludge incineration, and respiration; and 3) land via landfills, burials, and fertilizer. Once in the environment, dental mercury converts to its even more toxic form: methylmercury and becomes a major source of mercury in the fish people eat. Dental mercury in the environment can cause brain damage and neurological problems, especially for children and the unborn babies, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency.
- Workplace: Due to mercury exposure from amalgam in the workplace, studies have shown that dental workers have elevated systemic mercury levels. Few of these dental workers – mostly women of child-bearing age - are given protective garb or air masks to minimize their exposure to mercury; many are not aware of the risks of occupational mercury exposure. As a result, dental workers have reported neurological problems, reproductive failures, and birth defects caused by amalgam in the workplace.

And the amalgam problem even goes beyond mercury...

- Broken teeth: Placing amalgam requires the removal of a significant amount of healthy tooth matter. This removal, in turn, weakens overall tooth structure which increases the need for future dental work. On top of that, amalgam fillings - which expand and contract over time - crack teeth and once again create the need for still more dental work.
- Consent: Most dentists do not inform consumers that amalgam contains mercury. As a result, over 76% of consumers do not know that amalgam is mainly mercury according to Zogby polls. But once they are informed, 77% of people do not want mercury fillings - and they were even willing to pay more to avoid this unnecessary source of mercury exposure.
- Illegal Uses: Amalgam isn't only used by dentists... it can also fall into the hands of people who want it for criminal purposes or for a dangerous form of gold mining. For example, amalgam is commonly shipped to developing countries labeled for dental use, but then it is diverted to illegal use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining. Not only are the miners exposed to the risks of mercury poisoning, but the dental mercury they use to extract gold is released into the environment.
- Social Injustice: While middle class consumers opt for mercury-free filling materials, people in developing nations, low-income families, minorities, military personnel, prisoners, and people with disabilities are still subjected to amalgam. Racial minorities are more likely to receive amalgam; for example, dentists place almost 25% more mercury fillings in American Indian patients than in white patients. In his testimony before Congress, former Virginia state NAACP president Emmitt Carlton described this injustice as "choice for the rich, mercury for the poor."

“Our advocacy is much richer – and more effective – because we look at the overall problem of amalgam, not just one narrow aspect of the problem,” says Charlie Brown.

Principle #2: Every Treatment Plan for Every Patient Is Unique

Holistic dentists know that every patient is different; hence they carefully tailor treatments for each individual patient. Likewise, Consumers for Dental Choice knows that every government official and every forum is different. “So we tailor our strategy – that is, our message, our style, who is speaking, and even what language is spoken – to rise to every occasion,” explains Charlie Brown.

For example, Consumers for Dental Choice designed a legal strategy focused on First Amendment Rights to save the licenses of mercury-free dentists who were persecuted by dental boards a decade ago. Dentists had their licenses threatened – or even taken away – because they were speaking out for mercury-free dentistry. But Charlie argued that their speech was protected by the First Amendment right to free speech... and the courts agreed.

Then Consumers for Dental Choice launched a grassroots strategy to obtain laws requiring dentists to distribute amalgam fact sheets to patients. Basing the arguments on consumers’ basic human right to choose for themselves what filling material is used in their bodies, they succeeded in passing fact sheet laws in Maine, Connecticut, California, New Hampshire, and the city of Philadelphia.

Most recently, Consumers for Dental Choice had to make a fast transition to a diplomatic strategy highlighting amalgam’s environmental impact at the mercury treaty negotiations – and talked amalgam into this new environmental treaty! That’s why your gift is so important now.

Principle #3: Working as a Team Is Paramount

Holistic dentists know that teamwork is important to achieve optimal health for their patients. They work with dental hygienists, dental assistants, naturopaths, nutritionists, homeopaths, chiropractors, and so many other health professionals to keep you well. Consumers for Dental Choice knows more than a little about teamwork; they have built the largest network ever assembled to fight for mercury-free dentistry.

“With the first of five mercury treaty talks fast approaching in February 2010, we knew it was time to organize the mercury-free dentistry advocates from around the globe into a strong voice for patients, dental professionals, and the environment,” recalls Charlie Brown. “Hence, with our friends from around the world, we founded the World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry to be the umbrella coalition fighting for mercury-free fillings at the treaty talks... and we saw support for this cause skyrocket like never before.”

The World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry rapidly grew to include organizations from every inhabited continent. The experienced advocates working with the World Alliance speak more than 12 languages and hold advanced degrees in dentistry, medicine, law, international

policy, journalism, environmental engineering, science, and economics. “With this much support, we were in an excellent position as we entered into the final treaty talk last January.”

Now, the mercury treaty is done – and amalgam is in it! The team accomplished three things in the mercury treaty, formally called the Minamata Convention on Mercury:

- For the first time, nations have acknowledged that amalgam waste management is not enough. The final treaty language calls for nations to take measures “to phase down the *use* of dental amalgam.”
- Amalgam is the *only* mercury-added product in the treaty with a road map for *how* to phase down its use, providing nations with specific guidance on what measures can be taken to transition to mercury-free alternatives. That’s how seriously the nations are taking this issue. Phase-down measures listed in the treaty include adopting national objectives to minimize amalgam use, promoting the use of mercury-free alternatives, training dentists and dental students on alternatives, encouraging insurance policies that disfavor amalgam, and ending the use of unencapsulated bulk amalgam.
- The American Dental Association fought hard to keep amalgam out of Annex C, the part of the treaty that will be regularly reviewed and can be easily amended. Consumers for Dental Choice with the World Alliance team pushed hard to get amalgam into Annex C – and won! So now, the treaty’s amalgam provision that currently calls for a phase-down can be upgraded later... to set a phase-out date that will end amalgam use once and for all.

“Everyone at the treaty talks was surprised by how much progress we were able to make on the amalgam issue... from off the table to its own section in the mercury treaty,” says Charlie Brown. *“This treaty is the framework we need to move forward toward mercury-free dentistry everywhere.”*

And the team Charlie Brown assembled is doing just that, from training dentists to use alternatives in Africa... to speaking with dental students in Asia... to working with environmentalists in Latin America... to explaining the science to governments in Europe... to leading the grassroots protest against amalgam manufacturers right here in the U.S.

How You Can Support Mercury-Free Dentistry

Consumers for Dental Choice and its team have made amazing progress toward mercury-free dentistry. But there’s still hard work ahead as Consumers for Dental Choice is now running education programs for consumers... holding training sessions for dentists... and organizing briefings for governments around the world. You can help stop dental mercury today! Will you please consider a donation to Consumers for Dental Choice, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to advocating mercury-free dentistry?

Donations are tax-exempt and can be made online at www.toxicteeth.org. Checks can be mailed to:

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For updates on the movement for mercury-free dentistry, join Consumers for Dental Choice on [Facebook](#) or sign up to receive their [newsletter](#). Thank you for supporting mercury-free dentistry!