

Mercury-Free Dentists—Pioneers and Catalysts for 21st Century Health Care

By Dr. Mercola

Less than a generation ago, only three percent of dentists were mercury-free. Dentistry's best-kept secret was that amalgam fillings had mercury, a neurotoxin that can permanently injure the developing brains of children and fetuses.

The secret was enforced by tyrannical dental boards, which threatened to pull the license (the right to practice) of dentists who spoke out -- and who did in fact pull mercury-free dentists' licenses in California, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Minnesota, and New York.

Other mercury-free dentists faced unrelenting pressure from their peers to conform. An historic irony that dentists doing the right thing were ostracized is that is that the term "quack" derived from the German word for mercury, "Quecksilber." The "quacks" were the health professionals who used mercury!

It is to the great credit of these dentists -- who studied the science and opposed putting pollution in their patients' mouths -- that they stuck with their principles. As mercury-free dentistry grew, dentists began to adapt by offering mercury-free dentistry. Synergistically,, as mercury-free dentistry grew, so did consumer awareness.

Consumers for Dental Choice was created in 1997; its first project was to free up dentists to be able to advise, advocate, and advertise for mercury-free dentistry. To take out this notorious gag rule root and branch, Consumers for Dental Choice used a comprehensive strategy.

This NGO (non-government organization) built alliances with advocate groups, such as the Goldwater Institute and the American Civil Liberties Union. Then, this NGO went to the media, most spectacularly in California, where a page one story in the *Los Angeles Times* in September 1999 blew the lid off the dental board's denial of free speech rights.

Charlie Brown optimized his role as a former Attorney General, sitting down with his peers in several states to show why the law was in favor of the dissenting dentists. He found allies in state legislatures, such as Senator Karen Johnson of Arizona, Representative Hal Lynde of New Hampshire, and Representative John Rogers of Alabama.

Charlie Brown and his team worked to put supporters of mercury-free dentistry onto the formerly monopolistic dental boards, such as Dr. Jessica Saepoff of Washington state, Kevin Biggers and Dr. Chet Yokoyama of California, and the late Dr. Ron King of Minnesota.

With a growing body of public officials supporting mercury-free dentistry, they launched the State and Local Public Officials Mercury-Free Caucus, now chaired by former Senator Charlotte

Pritt of West Virginia. (Later, Senator Pritt and the Caucus were active in the pushing for amalgam language in the Minamata Convention.)

By the middle of the past decade, a sea-change had occurred. Dentists were advertising mercury-free dentistry. They went to public hearings and spoke out. They began to put to shame the dentists who kept using mercury and who used absurd arguments about mercury being inert and vapor-less.

Without Consumers for Dental Choice and the work of its leader Charlie Brown, these changes almost certainly would not have happened -- at least not in this century. Please recognize their leadership, and help them move forward. I will match your gift dollar for dollar.

Yet half of America's dentists have still not changed. This is particularly true in institutional dentistry -- the military, the prisons, the Veterans Administration, the Indian Reservations, and the corporate dentistry settings where dentists focus on "drill, fill, and bill." These dentists find succor under the protective wing of the pro-mercury American Dental Association (ADA), whose instructions invariably are to talk about amalgam without ever uttering the "M" word.

Mercury Undercover

Despite the progress, we have plenty of work do to. We finish up this, our fourth, Mercury-free Dentistry Week with a documentary by Elizabeth Hong and Daniel Montoya. *Mercury Undercover* exposes the very real dangers of mercury toxicity, and its connection to amalgam fillings.

Amalgam, also called "silver fillings," is in fact a massive consumer fraud. By referring to the *color* of the compound rather than its *content*, consumers everywhere have been tricked into placing a known neurotoxin in their mouths.

Think about it, if your dentist said, "Okay, I'm going to put a large mercury filling into this molar," you'd probably sit up and say, "Hey doc, maybe we should talk about this?!"

Most people are aware that mercury is hazardous to health, but if they *don't know* that amalgam contains [mercury](#), then they cannot object to it in the first place. And that's exactly how the dental industry and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) wants it.

Most Americans are Deceived by Inaccurate Terms

Consumers for Dental Choice recently issued a new report titled, [Measurably Misleading](#),¹ which reveals just how the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the dental industry have deceived you about amalgam.

A recent Zogby poll, commissioned by Consumers for Dental Choice, reveals that Americans are indeed fooled by the terms "silver fillings" and "amalgam." Fifty-seven percent of Americans are unaware that amalgam is a mercury filling, and 23 percent believe amalgam is made of silver. Also, a mere 11 percent of people say their dentist ever told them that amalgam contains mercury.

The FDA is responsible for addressing consumer fraud that occurs in medicine and health. But when it comes to mercury fillings, the agency has refused to take corrective action. Not only that, but it actually condones, not condemns, the marketing of amalgam as "silver fillings." Hence the deception continues.

Dental Mercury Fuels Chronic Inflammation in Your Body

Compelling evidence clearly shows that dental amalgams readily release mercury in the form of vapor every time you eat, drink, brush your teeth or otherwise stimulate your teeth. For a powerful demonstration of the reality of these vapors, please see the following video.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ylnQ-T7oiA>

As noted in a 2010 scientific review² on mercury exposure and children's health, there is *no known safe level of exposure for mercury*. Ideally, exposure should be zero, so any dentist insisting that mercury exposure from amalgam is "minimal" or "inconsequential" is really not acting in an ethical manner. The mercury vapors released from the amalgam in your teeth readily pass through your cell membranes, across your blood-brain barrier, and into your central nervous system. Effects can be psychological, neurological, and/or immunological.

At above average doses, brain functions such as reaction time, judgment, and language can be impaired. At very high exposures, mercury can affect your ability to walk, speak, think, and see clearly. One 2012 study³ evaluating the effects of mercury on cognition in otherwise healthy adults found that those with blood mercury levels below 5 µg/L had the best cognitive functions. Mild impairment was evident at blood mercury levels of 5 to 15 µg/L and above 15 µg/L, cognition was significantly impaired. Mercury is also known to cause kidney damage, which is why it's so important to have your mercury fillings removed by a properly trained [biological dentist](#).

As explained by [Dr. Chris Shade](#), mercury can also displace other elements such as zinc and copper, by attaching to the receptors that would otherwise hold these essential minerals. Overall, mercury has a very strong ability to dysregulate your entire system, which is part of the reason why mercury toxicity symptoms are so difficult to pin down. For example, I recently wrote about one case in which a woman diagnosed with [multiple sclerosis](#) came to realize she was actually suffering from mercury toxicity. She recovered after undergoing an appropriate detoxification protocol.

Putting an End to FDA and ADA's Concealment of Mercury

For decades, the FDA and American Dental Association (ADA) have successfully concealed the fact that amalgam is made of 50 percent mercury, and that there are health risks associated with mercury fillings. It's time for the truth to be acknowledged. Earlier this summer, a group of dentists, scientists and patients filed a lawsuit against the FDA. According to a recent news report,⁴ the group claims the FDA *"hasn't done enough to address any potential health hazards of amalgam and that it's low income groups... who often end up with these fillings because they don't have a choice..."*

More importantly, Consumers for Dental Choice is now taking the issue to the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, who signed the [Minamata treaty on mercury](#) last year on behalf of the US government. The Minamata Convention includes a pledge to scale down amalgam, *effective immediately*.

The FDA's stance on amalgam is in *direct violation* of the Minamata Convention, as its amalgam rule advocates more mercury fillings for Americans, not less! Consumers for Dental Choice has created a [petition to the Secretary of State](#), asking that he insist the FDA disclose the presence of mercury in dental amalgam. The petition also requests that the Secretary of State take action to end the use of amalgam in government agencies that provide dental care, such as the Veterans Administration, the Defense Department, and the Bureau of Prisons. I encourage you to sign and share this [petition](#) with your Facebook and Twitter networks.

Why Do Half of All American Dentists Still Use Mercury Amalgam?

When Consumers for Dental Choice was founded, only three percent of dentists were mercury-free. The organization has been instrumental in catalyzing change in the industry. Today, more than 50 percent of dentists in America have stopped using mercury fillings. Unfortunately, we seem to have stalled out at around 50 percent of dentists who still insist on using amalgam.

"We think the pro-mercury dentists have stabilized because they won't learn anything new and the profits are so easy," Charlie Brown says.

Indeed, dentists make more money per chair per day when using mercury fillings. For factory-style dentistry, where the teeth represent dollar signs instead of part of a human being, dentists drill, fill, and bill. The term "drill, fill, and bill" is a joke aspiring dentists learn in dental school. Only the joke is on us and our children. They count their money, and we have a vaporous neurotoxin implanted an inch from our brains. And of course, since amalgam damages tooth structure and cracks teeth, pro-mercury dentists continue to profit from amalgam long after its initial placement.

For Decades, the ADA Forbade Dentists to Reveal Truth about Amalgam

The ADA's longstanding effort to keep consumers uninformed is another factor that has kept the secret going for so long. The ADA owns two patents on amalgam, patent numbers 4,018,600 and 4,078,921. The patents have now expired, but while they were in effect the ADA went to incredible lengths to wipe out mercury-free dentistry and quash dissent from the emerging critics of mercury-based dentistry. It went so far as to adopt a "rule of conduct" that actually *prohibited* dentists from discussing mercury with their patients:

"Based on available scientific data, the ADA has determined that the removal of amalgam restorations from the non-allergic patient for the alleged purpose of removing toxic substances from the body, when such treatment is performed solely at the recommendation or suggestion of the dentist, is improper and unethical."

Yes, the ADA said it is *unethical* for a dentist to tell the truth to his patients. This gag rule, enforced by state dental boards, clearly violated the First Amendment. It was finally undone by Consumers for Dental Choice, starting in 1998, and by dentists who boldly stepped forward over the years. Still, the effects linger.

Mercury has No Place in 21st Century Dentistry

As noted in the Consumers for Dental Choice report [*Measurably Misleading*](#),⁵ a majority of consumers are not given even the most basic information about amalgam—the fact that it contains mercury. The central deception revolves around referring to mercury fillings as "silver" or "amalgam." Still to this day, many dentists will not use the "M" word, *mercury*, in talking to their patients for fear of jeopardizing their license, thanks to the ADA's rule of conduct (above). For a long while now, mercury has been dentistry's greatest controversy and its great little secret.

Fortunately, dentists worldwide are now moving toward mercury-free dentistry. Indeed, it's time for dentists everywhere to "grab the bull by the horn" and tell their patients that amalgam is about 50 percent mercury. The word "silver filling" is a deception, and "amalgam" is an ambiguity. Both terms need to be replaced with the truthful description of "mercury filling." Mercury-free dentistry *is* the future, but to get there, consumers need to be told the truth, and that means that dentists need to speak out and make their voices heard in their communities.

Important Information Regarding Amalgam Removal

For those of you who have mercury fillings, I recommend that you have them removed. However, it's very important to get it done right. Removing amalgam fillings can expose you to *significant* amounts of mercury vapors if the dentist doesn't know what he or she is doing. The following links can help you to find a mercury-free, biological dentist, trained in the safe removal of amalgam:

- [Consumers for Dental Choice](#)
- [International Academy of Biological Dentistry & Medicine \(IABDM\)](#)
- [Dental Amalgam Mercury Solutions \(DAMS\)](#). E-mail them at: dams@usfamily.net or call 651-644-4572 for an information packet
- [Huggins Applied Healing](#). You'll need to fill out a form and they will connect with you to find a suitable dentist in your area
- [Holistic Dental Association](#)
- [International Association of Mercury Safe Dentists](#)

Bringing Mercury-Free Dentistry to the US

Working with talented environmental, consumer, and health leaders, Consumers for Dental Choice is launching mercury amalgam phase-out campaigns in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In the United States, efforts are also being redoubled, with a focus on forcing the FDA to uphold the promise made by the nation when it signed the Minamata treaty on mercury pollution.

It's quite simple really. The United States of America has made a promise to the international community to immediately begin reducing the use of amalgam, and the FDA is in direct violation of this promise. Consumers for Dental Choice is betting that the Secretary of State will not allow the FDA to embarrass the White House and the entire country by refusing to take the most *basic* of steps toward a phase-down of mercury fillings, which is: *informing consumers that amalgam is made with mercury, and telling dentists to inform their patients of the same.*

This is the week we can get Consumers for Dental Choice the funding it deserves to achieve these aims. I have found few NGOs as effective, and none as efficient, as Consumers for Dental Choice. Its small team has led the charge on six continents -- including ours! So I am stepping up with the challenge. For the fourth year in a row, I will match the funds you give. In 2012, the match was up to \$50,000 -- and you did it! In 2013, I upped the ante to \$75,000 -- and you did it again! This year, I will match \$100,000. So please give, and all donations received up to \$100,000 will be matched by Natural Health Research Foundation, which I founded.

A final, important word: avoid dentists who use mercury amalgams, and advise your friends and family to do the same. It's time for each of us to ask this simple question to the dentist before we get a filling done: "Doctor, do you practice mercury-free dentistry on all of your patients?" If your dentist is mercury-free, thank him or her. If not, consider finding a mercury-free dentist. As with genetically engineered foods, voting with your pocket book is one of the most effective strategies we consumers have at our disposal.