



Transition Sonoma Valley
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February 21, 2014

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

TSV Supports More Fact and Less Hyperbole in the Water Fluoridation Debate

The quality and sustainability of our local water supply are among our top priorities at Transition Sonoma Valley. Nevertheless, we have resisted a rush to judgment in the fluoridation debate. When the County's fluoride treatment plans were first announced, members of our Steering Committee were skeptical of claims made by anti-fluoride advocates that challenged the conventional wisdom offered by our leading public health agencies, in particular the Centers for Disease Control, the CA Department of Public Health, and the Sonoma County Department of Health Services. Though we initially held back, we were pleased our partners at the Sonoma Valley Grange stepped up to co-sponsor a public forum with advocates on both sides of the issue, receiving favorable coverage in all the local papers.

We recognize that as our elected officials, you must often rely on complex and imperfect scientific data and the interpretations of technical experts to make difficult decisions. Recently, several members on our core Steering Team reviewed some of the same scientific literature cited by the health agencies listed above. What we've discovered has left us skeptical that you, the Supervisors, may not have been given a complete and accurate interpretation of all the scientific facts to date. Among the more disturbing findings of our independent research:

The US Centers for Disease Control identifies three key studies, the most recent relying on data now over 15 years old, to justify broad statements such as: "Numerous studies, taken together, clearly establish a causal relationship between water fluoridation and the prevention of dental caries (PHS 1991)".

However, upon closer examination, we found the key meta-studies actually cited contain troubling qualifying statements made by the researchers themselves, such as:

- "No randomized controlled trials of the effects of water fluoridation were found."
- "The most serious defect of these studies was the lack of appropriate analysis."
- "Given the level of interest surrounding the issue of public water fluoridation, it is surprising to find that little high quality research has been undertaken." (York 2000).

Although we strongly support effective and ambitious public health policies, particularly when targeted to address the needs of the most vulnerable members of our community, we have concluded we cannot support investing in such a controversial and expensive plan when the primary scientific data on which it depends remains so inconclusive and out-of-date.

We are confident that if you do your own review of these scientific reports you too will decide that the evidence does not support Sonoma County embarking on such a widespread and risky policy at this time.

Instead, we encourage you to direct the Department of Health Services to work more directly with the MediCal-qualified population who suffers most from dental disease and redirect this funding to the other undisputed “pillars” of dental health: dental sealants in school-aged children, varnishes in infancy and childhood, improved access to dental care, and education on proper diet and dental habits.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steering Committee - Transition Sonoma Valley

PS - A version of this letter will be presented at the February 25 Board of Supervisor’s meeting.