

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

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\$100,000 SO-CALLED REWARD OFFER -- A GIMMICK

For years a so-called reward offer has been circulated by the opponents of fluoridation. The fact that the reward has not been collected has been used by them as substantiating their claims. Recently, a flyer has appeared in which the reward has been increased. The clever wording of this reward offer clearly exposes it to be an uncollectible gimmick. Examples of its inherent fallacies follow:

(1) The wording asks proof that fluoridation "will cause no future body harms." This would require proof of events which will take place in the future, which is impossible.

(2) The wording asks that, using PHS recommended fluoride levels (approx. 1 ppm), proof be given that "poisonous" fluorides are safe. Fluorides at PHS recommended levels are not poisonous, and proof of effectiveness and safety at such levels would be irrelevant to use at the much higher levels at which fluoride could be termed "poisonous."

(3) The so-called reward offer is ambiguous, with no indication of what would be considered a "controlled" experiment, what proof would be considered acceptable, or who would make the decision as to whether the proof was acceptable.

(4) The flyer requires the posting of a bond by anyone attempting to collect the reward to cover any costs which the offerors of the reward might incur if the proof is deemed invalid; this condition would be extremely difficult to comply with, for the amount of such possible costs would appear to be impossible to determine in advance. Moreover, in view of the difficulties and ambiguities in the nature and wording of the offer which are pointed out above, a person seeking to collect the reward could easily be placed in an impossible economic position.

(5) Posting of the bond, above, could make payment of the reward unenforceable, because the entire offer might be considered a wager, and the courts will not enforce the collection of a gambling debt.

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It is clear, therefore, that the so-called reward is a gimmick that serves to confuse and deter action on a proven public health measure. If after a quarter-century of demonstration of the use of fluoridation at Public Health Service recommended levels, with no clinically substantiated evidence of any bad or harmful effects from drinking such water, opponents still question the safety and effectiveness of fluoridation, it would appear that no evidence could ever be acceptable to them.

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