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MAYO CLINIC DOCTORS RESTATE ENDORSEMENT OF FLUORIDATION
AND REFUTE MISINTERPRETATION OF KIDNEY DISEASE RESEARCH

The September 8, 1973, Letters to the Editor column of The Boston Globe carried a letter from Dr. Phillip Zanfagna, alleging that there are medical hazards to consumers of fluoridated water. This letter cited some reports on kidney disease studies from the Mayo Clinic. A letter from Mayo Clinic staff members, published in the Globe on November 6, stated that Dr. Zanfagna had, in his letter, presented the facts incorrectly, drawn inaccurate conclusions, and "dismayed" the authors of the reports by his interpretation of their research. Their letter also noted that the Board of Governors of the Mayo Clinic has since 1959 unanimously endorsed a program of water fluoridation for Rochester, Minnesota. Rochester, the city where the Mayo Clinic is located and where essentially all of its staff physicians and employees reside, has been fluoridated since 1960.

Copies of the full text of both letters are attached.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR
BOSTON GLOBE (MORNING)
SEPTEMBER 8, 1973

Fluoride dangerous

Medical hazards of fluoridated water to consumers are being reported with increasing frequency by researchers throughout the world including scientists from the famed Mayo Clinic.

A recent article by Mayo Clinic physicians in the Nov. 13, 1972 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Assn., for instance, reported crippling bone changes in two young persons with kidney disease from fluoride in drinking water at or near the so-called safe concentration, and the death of one of them. At least four similar deaths are recorded in the US medical literature.

In a more recent report (July 16) another Mayo Clinic physician states that 11 of 12 patients exposed to fluoride for two years or more developed symptomatic bone disease with severe pain and rib fractures. In addition, two patients experienced extreme wasting, suggesting other poisonous effects of fluoride.

"We are convinced," the report concludes, "that fluoride is harmful in long-term dialysis." Another patient with fluoride poisoning caused by the use of freeze-dried tea is also under their treatment. Fluoride poisoning in habitual tea drinkers has been reported from England.

In view of these facts, Dr. William J. Bicknell, as Commissioner of Public Health, should immediately stop the addition of any fluoride chemical to the water systems of the MDC and other communities in Massachusetts or disprove the Mayo Clinic research. Entrusted with the health of all individuals he has no alternative.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR
BOSTON GLOBE (EVENING)
NOVEMBER 6, 1973

Report misinterpreted

You published a letter to the Editor entitled "Fluoride dangerous," by Dr. Philip Zanfagna. In it, he quoted reports from the Mayo Clinic about the supposed hazards of fluoridation.

As co-authors of these reports, and as Mayo Clinic physicians, we are dismayed by Dr. Zanfagna's interpretation of our research. Not only did he present the facts incorrectly, he drew inaccurate conclusions, to which we do not subscribe at all. According to Dr. Zanfagna, our two young patients with kidney disease had "crippling bone changes" from fluoride in their drinking water "at or near the so-called safe concentration."

In reality, these two patients had no clinical symptoms of bone disease whatsoever. Only their x-ray films showed evidence of fluoride effects. Both patients had their kidney disorders since birth. Their disease made them abnormally thirsty much of the time, so they drank extremely large quantities of water — which, in their community, happened to contain a high concentration of naturally occurring fluoride. Because their kidneys were unable to dispose of the fluoride as a normal person's do, some of the excess reached their bones. We wish to emphasize, however, that neither patient has experienced any bone symptoms. Furthermore, both are alive today and doing well, contrary to Dr. Zanfagna's statement that one died.

The doctor says that "another Mayo Clinic physician states that 11 of 12 patients exposed to fluoride for two years or more developed symptomatic bone disease with severe pain and rib fractures." What he failed to point out was that these patients had advanced kidney disease and that they were being treated with an artificial kidney machine, which uses water to remove waste materials from the blood — ordinary

ily a function of normal kidneys. Although it was not recognized at the time, the use of fluoridated water in the artificial kidney resulted in excessive bone absorption of fluoride. And these patients did, indeed, have serious bone problems. However, this degree of absorption would be virtually impossible from drinking fluoridated water, even in patients with kidney disease. And since we discovered the problems created by using fluoridated water in the artificial kidney machine, we have advocated substituting specially treated fluoride-free water for this purpose.

Certainly, we never implied that fluoridated water is harmful to the general population. Our reports referred only to a very limited group of patients — those receiving special treatment for advanced kidney disease. For comparison, consider the patient with diabetes, who must limit the sugar in his diet. Or the kidney patient, who must cut down on the salt he uses. Even sugar and salt at certain levels can be harmful to some types of patients.

To give Globe readers an idea of Mayo Clinic's stand on fluoridation, members of our Department of Dentistry favor fluoridation of public water supplied. Moreover, since 1959 the board of governors of the Mayo Clinic has unanimously endorsed a program of fluoridation for Rochester, Minn. — the city where the Mayo Clinic is located and where essentially all of its staff physicians and employees reside.

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