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Contact: EWG Public Affairs, (202) 667-6982

Harvard Study:

Strong Link Between Fluoridated Water

and Bone Cancer in Boys

Department Chair With Industry Ties

Misrepresented Results to Federal Authorities

(WASHINGTON, April 5) — Boys who drink water with levels of fluoride considered safe by federal guidelines are five times more likely to have a rare bone cancer than boys who drink unfluoridated water, according to a study by Harvard University scientists published in a peer-reviewed journal.

The study, led by Dr. Elise Bassin and published online today in Cancer Causes and Control, the official journal of the Harvard Center for Cancer Prevention, found a strong link between fluoridated drinking water and osteocarcoma, a rare and often fatal bone cancer, in boys. The study confirms studies by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the New Jersey health department that also found increased rates of bone cancer in boys who drank fluoridated tap water.

Bassin's study comes on the heels of a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report that found the federal "safe" limit for fluoride in tap water did not protect children from dental fluorosis or increased bone fractures. The NAS recommended that the allowable limit for fluoride in tap water be lowered immediately.

"This study raises very serious concerns about fluoride's safety and its potential to cause bone cancer in teenage boys," said Richard Wiles, EWG's senior vice president. "The findings raise fundamental questions about the wisdom of adding fluoride to tap water."

The Bassin study is also at the center of a joint federal and Harvard ethics investigation into whether Dr. Chester Douglass—the chairman of Oral Health Policy and epidemiology at Harvard Dental School and Bassin's doctoral thesis advisor—lied about the results of her work when reporting the results of his federally funded research to the

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS).

Last year, Environmental Working Group (EWG) obtained documents strongly suggesting that Douglass may have misrepresented Bassin's findings. Douglass has received large federal grants to study the relationship between fluoridated drinking water and bone cancer, and is on the payroll of Colgate, the toothpaste giant, where he has edited their dentists' newsletter for more than a decade.

When pressed recently by an investigative reporter from Fox News in Boston as to the quality of Bassin's findings, Douglass had nothing but praise for the work. "She did a good job. She had a good group of people advising her. And it's a nice—it's a nice analysis. There's nothing wrong with that analysis," he said.

"It's nice to see that Dr. Douglass has finally come clean on the quality of Dr. Bassin's work. It's just a shame that he was not so forthcoming when reporting on his work to the NIH," Wiles said.

Fox filmed Dr. Douglass waving a draft copy of Harvard's investigation of his conduct, and saying the university's report will be coming out soon. Last year, EWG asked the NIEHS, which funded Douglass' research, to investigate whether he misrepresented his findings.

EWG urges communities not to add fluoride to tap water, and advises parents to avoid fluoridated water for their children, particularly bottle fed infants. "Fluoride is fine in toothpaste, where it is directly applied to the teeth, but provides almost no dental benefit in water, while presenting serious health risks, particularly for boys," Wiles said.

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Environmental Working Group is a nonprofit research organization based in Washington, D.C., that uses the power of information to protect human health and the environment. The group's work on fluoride is available at http://www.ewg.org/issues/siteindex/issues.php?issueid=5031.

Recent Studies Finding Cavities Don't Increase When Fluoridation Stops

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