

This response was submitted to the consultation held by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on *Public Health: ethical issues* between May and September 2006. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

Anne Butcher

QUESTIONS ANSWERED:

Question 8 Supplementation of food and water

ANSWER:

Fluoridation of water has met with more resistance because it is mass medication. Individuals have a choice whether they eat margarine and whether to eat breakfast cereals, etc. Clearly, the same choice cannot be exercised in the case of water supplies. Fluoridation of water would also result in contamination of the food chain, since crops would be watered with it and animals drink it. Also, as a separate point, the substance added to water to make it "fluoridated" is not the same as that which is present in naturally fluoridated water, although those aiming to promote fluoridation try very hard to conceal this fact. Even in the case of naturally occurring fluoride, the "optimal level" to which your consultation document refers would more accurately be referred to as a maximum contaminant level, since fluoride is not a nutrient, it is a poison. In addition to the toxic nature of the fluoride itself, the chemical added to fluoridate water, hexafluorosilicic acid (which is obtained from the pollution scrubbers of the phosphate fertiliser industry) is contaminated with arsenic, beryllium, lead, mercury and cadmium. I fail to understand how it can possibly be acceptable to put these substances in drinking water. International differences in acceptance? There is international outcry and objection to fluoridation. If you are in any doubt about this check the sites on the internet. Just because it has been imposed on populations does not mean that it is accepted or ethically acceptable. Democratic instruments should be required to justify? No local authority, Parliamentary or other collective decision-making process is in any way appropriate in this instance. Fluoridation is not a water treatment - it is a person treatment. As an individual I have a right to refuse medical intervention and I have not vested in my MP, my local councillor or my neighbour the authority to decide what is good for me or my child. Fluoridation is mass medication - and mass medication is an abuse of human rights. Children benefit the most from fluoridation? Do they? Where's the evidence? The York Review was unable to find sufficient high quality evidence so where has yours come from? The British Fluoridation Society (Oh dear!) A fact that has been established is that children in fluoridated areas have a high incidence (48% according to the York Review) of fluorosis. This is not merely a cosmetic issue, it is a symptom of systemic fluoride poisoning. (Hansard -20 April 1999. Baroness Hayman responding for the Government) Under what circumstances is it acceptable to restrict the choice of individuals in order to protect the health of children? ... Even if the effectiveness of fluoridation in preventing tooth decay were proven, which it is not, and risk-free, which it is not, it still not acceptable to administer a medicine to my child in order to prevent tooth decay in another child. Perhaps the individual choices that should be restricted are those of feckless parents to feed their children sugary foods & drinks and not have a proper dental hygiene regime. It is probably politically incorrect to say this but the children who need improvements to their dental health do not drink water now and would continue not drinking water if it were fluoridated.