Water fluoridation: Time for action

Dear Editor

I am writing to express my strong support for the recent statement by the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry (BASCD) regarding the importance of community water fluoridation as a safe, equitable, and effective intervention. As we examine the evidence available today, it becomes clear that water fluoridation plays a crucial role in reducing the prevalence and severity of tooth decay, as well as in addressing oral health inequalities in society.

Dental caries continues to be a significant public health concern, impacting individuals of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds. Fluoride is considered as the main factor responsible for reducing dental caries prevalence through various mechanisms, such as enhancing dental mineralization and its bactericidal effect. The introduction of water fluoridation programs has proven to be one of the most successful public health initiatives, contributing to improved oral health outcomes in communities around the world. The evidence indicates that a 35% reduction in dental caries can be achieved by water fluoridation in permanent dentition. Moreover, community water fluoridation initiatives stand out as the most cost-effective means for reducing dental caries within a population, as the expense of a lifetime of water fluoridation for an individual is lower than the cost of a single dental filling.

While there may be conversations regarding the potential harm of fluoride, it is essential to consider these discussions in the context of scientific evidence. Numerous robust studies conducted over several decades consistently demonstrate the safety and efficacy of water fluoridation at the optimal level recommended by dental and public health authorities. The World Health Organization and many other reputable organizations endorse water fluoridation as a valuable public health measure. In 2007, WHO World Health Assembly proclaimed that ensuring universal access to fluoride for caries prevention is an essential component of the fundamental human right to health.

It is crucial to address the concerns raised about water fluoridation by providing accurate information based on scientific research. Misinformation and opinions, unsupported by strong evidence, can undermine public health efforts and perpetuate oral health disparities. Dental professionals and researchers must continue to engage with the public, dispelling myths and promoting the proven benefits of water fluoridation to ensure the optimal oral health of all individuals, regardless of their social or economic circumstances.

Additionally, it is important to recognize that still in some areas, the existing fluoride level in water falls short of the optimal level. This issue highlights the need for continued advocacy and awareness to encourage governments and policy-makers to prioritize the implementation and maintenance of appropriate water fluoridation levels. By investing in robust infrastructure and ensuring optimal fluoride concentration in public water supplies, we can maximize the benefits of this preventive measure and contribute to the reduction of oral health inequalities.

In conclusion, I urge dental professionals, policymakers, and the public to rely on scientific evidence when considering the importance of water fluoridation. The overwhelming body of research supports its safety, effectiveness, and equity in addressing tooth decay and reducing oral health inequalities. It is our responsibility to champion evidence-based practices and promote the well-being of all individuals by advocating for the universal implementation of water fluoridation programs.

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References


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