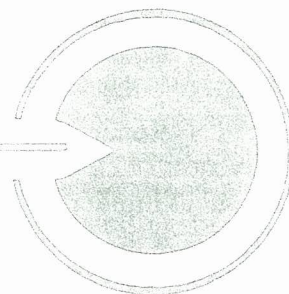


BIO-PROBE

NEWSLETTER



Volume 7

January 1991

Issue 1

PRO-AMALGAM PUBLIC STATEMENTS: A MEDICO-LEGAL TIME BOMB!

The 16 December 1990 "60 Minutes" program on mercury amalgam dental fillings has generated widespread public interest. Increased media exposure of the amalgam controversy, together with the new research being published and the Class Action suit filed against the American Dental Association in September, has forced the pro-amalgam dental establishment to publicly defend itself. Many public statements, and charges, are being made. This issue of the BPNL is devoted to answering those statements and charges being publicly made by the pro-amalgam dental establishment.

Quoting directly from the Dental Practice Act in one state: "No dentist shall disseminate or cause the dissemination of any advertisement or advertising which is in any way fraudulent, false, deceptive, or misleading in form or content. Additionally, no dentist shall disseminate or cause the dissemination of any advertisement or advertising which: (h) Contains other representations or implications that in reasonable probability will cause an ordinary prudent person to misunderstand or to be deceived." This Act also defines advertisement and advertising as "any statements, oral or written, disseminated to or before the public or any portion thereof--."

Similar language is found in the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Act of the United States and the ADA "Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct."

Public statements claiming the harmlessness of mercury amalgam dental fillings, particularly from individuals claiming to represent the dental profession in general, do have a profound influence on the public health. The current and forthcoming scientific documentation on the subject makes it distinctly probable that pro-mercury dentists may soon be called before State Dental Boards to justify their public statements. It is therefore advisable to examine the validity of their statements.

SCIENTIFIC "EVIDENCE" OF AMALGAM SAFETY

Due to the time limitations of the 60 Minutes program, one aspect of the controversy was not thoroughly addressed. At one point in the program Morley Safer asked the A.D.A. representative, Dr. Heber Simmons, Jr., the following question: "Do you have any scientific evidence that it is safe?" Dr. Simmons replied:

"Absolutely. There are numerous studies that have been done." Responsibility to the public health borne by Dr. Simmons, and other pro-amalgam spokesmen, makes it essential to examine the validity of this statement.

THE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION

In an article entitled "When Your Patients Ask About Mercury in Amalgam" in the April, 1990 edition of the Journal of the American Dental Association (Vol. 120:395-8), the ADA stated: "The strongest and most convincing support we have for the safety of dental amalgam is the fact that each year more than 100 million amalgam fillings are placed in the United States. And since amalgam has been used for more than 150 years,

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Pro-amalgam public statements: A medico-legal time bomb!</i>	1
FORUM	
<i>IAOMT February 1991 Scientific Seminar</i>	8
<i>Vident certifys porcelain without radioactivity</i>	8
<i>Foundation for Environmental Health Research and the Academy for Biological Dentistry seminar</i>	8

© Copyright 1991, Bio-Probe, Inc. The Bio-Probe Newsletter is published bi-monthly. Sam Ziff Editor. Editorial office is at 4401 Real Ct. Orlando, FL 32808. Subscription price is \$65.00 per year. Postage paid at Orlando, Florida

literally billions of amalgam fillings have been successfully used to restore decayed teeth." Mass media attention to the amalgam controversy, along with the recently filed class action suit, has forced the ADA to attempt to bolster this totally anecdotal position.

On 11 October 1990, the ADA provided a press release entitled "ADA Reaffirms Safety and Effectiveness of Dental Amalgam", citing "several factors" in reasserting its position. These "factors" were references to implied "studies".

Only two of these "studies" had anything at all to do with the possible health effects of mercury amalgam fillings in patients. These were two epidemiological studies from Sweden, one on 1000 patients and the other on 1200 patients.

THE TWO SWEDISH EPIDEMIOLOGY REPORTS

"Number of Amalgam Tooth Fillings in Relation to Subjectively Experienced Symptoms in a Study of Swedish Women."

Ahlqwist, M; Bengtsson, C; Furunes, B; Hollender, L; Lapidus, L.
Community Dent Oral Epidemiol. 16:227-31. 1988.

In this report, 1024 women (ages 38-72) from Gothenburg, Sweden answered a questionnaire of 30 specific questions concerning different symptoms and complaints they had during the previous three months. The answers were related to the number of tooth surfaces restored with amalgam.

The number of amalgam fillings for each individual was estimated from panoramic x-rays. The women were divided into two groups, one group with four (4) or fewer surfaces of amalgam and the other group with twenty (20) or more surfaces of amalgam. Their was no control group of subjects who had no exposure to mercury from amalgam dental fillings.

The authors further stated that "about 80% of the teeth of the participants in this study were restored", suggesting that many teeth that previously contained amalgams may have already been pulled. For example, some women with only four amalgams may have only had six or ten remaining teeth, as indicated by the fact that 80% of the subject teeth were filled. Mercury exposure from amalgam bearing teeth that had been pulled was not considered. Further, it is most likely that crowned teeth previously contained large amalgams or possessed amalgam cores underneath. The report contained no data on the individual status of subjects other than the division into two groups.

The authors found no positive correlations between the symptoms and the number of surfaces of amalgam. In fact, a few of the symptoms showed inverse correlations to the amalgams.

"Medical Diagnoses and Symptoms Related to Amalgam Fillings."

Lavstedt, S; Sundberg, H.
Tandlakartidnigen. 81(3):81-8. 1989.

This is a report on 1204 individuals who were studied in 1970 and grouped according to the number of filled tooth surfaces. The mean number of surfaces of amalgam in the five groups of subjects were 6.4, 21.1, 32.6, 39.2, and 37.9. There was no control group of subjects who had never had exposure to mercury from amalgam dental fillings. There was a sixth group of 90 subjects with no remaining teeth. The questionnaire contained 14 questions on health status and 4 clinical tests were used (hemoglobin, systolic BP, diastolic BP, pulse pressure).

No data is provided on the number of missing teeth in individual subjects, previous amalgams in these teeth, or the presence of other metals in individual subjects. The authors stated that amalgam fillings around crowns were not counted in the study.

The authors found no significant positive correlations between the symptoms or tests and the number of surfaces of amalgam. The subjects with no remaining teeth did have significantly fewer symptoms of the stomach and intestine.

BIO-PROBE COMMENT: The reliance upon these two flawed "studies" as the foundation for the position that mercury amalgam dental fillings are totally harmless to patients is an insult to the dental