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Water fluoride: The Alberta experience

From time to time we hear of additional support and evidence for the preventive efforts that are utilized worldwide. One of the latest pieces of evidence regarding water fluoridation is from Alberta, Canada.^{1,2} A natural experimental opportunity was provided by fluoridation cessation in the city of Calgary, which occurred in May 2011, after having been in place since 1991. This enabled a comparison of caries rates in Calgary to those in the city of Edmonton, where fluoridation began in 1967 and remains in place. It was not surprising to find a significantly greater caries rate increase in Calgary compared to Edmonton only 2.5 to 3 years post-cessation. Those findings contribute to the solid published literature on fluoridation cessation and its impact on dental caries. Furthermore, the results are consistent with increasing inequities in dental caries following cessation of community water fluoridation.²

The question is, why are we in the dental community not vocal enough in reporting those results and supporting continued, appropriate level, water fluoridation? Caries is one of the most prevalent diseases in the western world, and is one of the most preventable conditions in the medical field. Why don't we fight more to promote prevention and cure, and to avoid misconceptions among our patients and the general population?³⁻⁵

It is not enough to silently read and understand these studies; we should promote health on every level and make sure that people, both lay and at the decision-making levels, are well aware of the available data and interpret it correctly when considering future steps. Many of us are doing this, but we should all try to take part in the important worldwide effort to prevent disease and eliminate inequities in health care.

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