Dentists join campaign against fluoridation in Southampton

Open letter of opposition published, marking one year anniversary of South Central Strategic Health Authority landmark decision

A host of signatories, including dental professionals, have signed an open letter of opposition against the deci-sion to fluoridate drink- ing water in Southampton. It is a year since the South Central Strategic Health Author-ity (SCSHA) took the decision to add fluoride to water in South-ampton and parts of Hampshire.

Much of the antipathy to the scheme is because the people in the area feel their views have been ignored as the SCSHA is going ahead despite 72 per cent of public consultation respondents rejecting the proposal.

Local opposition
The letter states that during the past year, local opposition to the scheme has grown, a 57,000-signature petition has been handed in to Downing Street and every local MP has since written to the Strategic Health Authority to express concern about the continuing determination to impose fluoridation on an unwilling community.

The letter adds: “We urge you to ensure that the local NHS places greater emphasis on the implementation of targeted com-munity-based oral health strate-gies as an alternative to water fluoridation.”

It points to a peer-reviewed study published in the Journal of the American Dental Asso-ciation that confirms previous re-search showing that babies fed formula milk in areas where the water is fluoridated at 1.0ppm may receive excess fluoride, putting them at risk of fluorosis.

Exceed the limit
The authors conclude that when powdered or liquid con-centrate infant formulas are the primary source of nutrition, some babies are likely to ex-ced the recommended fluoride upper limit if the formula is re-constituted with water containing 1.0ppm fluoride.

The plan for fluoridation is currently on hold as the SHA is facing a legal challenge to its decision.

The High Court has confirmed that the ear-liest the judicial re-view can be heard by a senior judge is July or August.

The SHA has set aside £400,000 for the legal fight. The legal challenge has been lodged by Leigh Day & Co on behalf of Geraldine Milner, a life long resident of South-ampton.

In a statement, Leigh Day & Co said: “Ms Milner is opposed to the proposals to fluor- idate the water supply on account of the continuing uncertainties with regard to the long term health risks associated with fluoridation, as well as concerns with regard to the possible adverse environ-mental effects. She also con-siders that more targeted and less intrusive measures should be used to deal with problems of tooth decay in the South-ampton area.”

Majority favour
The legal challenge argues that the SCSHA failed to have regard to the British Govern-ment’s policy that mass fluo-ridation of drinking water should only go ahead in any particular area if a majority of the local people are in favour of it.

The open letter, which was submitted by the cam-paign group Hampshire Against Fluoridation said: “Given the fi-nancial constraints currently faced by the NHS, we are con-cerned that precious NHS funds are being used to force through a scheme that the local commu-nity does not want. These funds could be better used to develop alternative, more effective oral health schemes.”

‘Waste of money’
The SHA’s decision to continue with water fluoridation and to fight a legal challenge is seen as a waste of Health Service money and we are concerned that this will damage the reputation of the local NHS.

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