

Movement to Stop Mercury in Dentistry Gains Momentum

Analysis by Charlie Brown, J.D.

August 25, 2022

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › With its focused mission to abolish dental amalgam, Consumers for Dental Choice has engineered powerful coalitions that, step by step, are ridding the world of the dreadful 150-year mistake of putting mercury in the mouth
- › The U.S. Food and Drug Administration warns millions of Americans – children of any age, young women, those with kidney or neurological issues – not to get dental amalgam. No consumer should receive a dental amalgam and no dentist should implant them – the risk to you and the harm to the environment is too great! Do not go to a dentist who still uses mercury
- › Springboarding from the FDA warnings, Consumers for Dental Choice has created enormous momentum toward mercury-free dentistry: manufacturers exit the amalgam business, the Minamata Convention is amended to protect children from amalgam, and the pro-mercury opposition is starting to crumble
- › Consumers for Dental Choice needs your help to take on government dental programs that still put mercury in children, finish off the amalgam industry, and go for a total ban on amalgam use
- › Dr. Mercola will match every dollar you donate to Consumers for Dental Choice until Saturday night August 27, 2022 (up to \$150,000). Here is your chance to help send dental amalgam to the hazardous waste bins of history!

After more than two decades of pushing the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to protect the public from dental amalgam – a filling material that is 50% toxic mercury –

Consumers for Dental Choice achieved a 180-degree turnaround in federal amalgam policy.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a [safety communication](#) on dental amalgam in 2020, finally recommending against amalgam use in people who are at higher risk from the adverse effects of mercury exposure, including ...

Pregnant women and their developing babies	Women who are planning to become pregnant
Nursing women and their newborns and infants	Children, especially those younger than six years of age
People with pre-existing neurological disease	People with impaired kidney function
People with known heightened sensitivity (allergy) to mercury or other components of dental amalgam	

This list, of course, encompasses a significant part of the population. As such, FDA's action has the potential to protect millions and millions of Americans from mercury in their mouths.

FDA's safety communication also had another significant effect – it created a momentum for mercury-free dentistry that was unimaginable just a few years ago. As a result, we are seeing amazing progress on all fronts – from our challenge to amalgam sellers to our international campaign.

Celebration of Mercury Awareness Week

Dr. Mercola is helping us keep up this momentum! Each year, Dr. Mercola hosts Mercury Awareness Week, during which he focuses readers on the need for mercury-free

dentistry and provides updates on our movement to protect human health, the environment, and the workplace from dental mercury.

And he puts his money on the table to further this important cause. In honor of Mercury Awareness Week, Dr. Mercola steps up to match dollar for dollar what consumers, mercury-free dentists, other health professionals, and businesses give – up to a grand total of \$150,000.

Your gift will be matched through midnight your time Saturday, August 27, 2022. Just click the button below to donate now or mail a check (postmarked by August 29) to us at our new address: Consumers for Dental Choice, 727 15th St., NW, Suite 701, Washington DC 20005.

[**DONATE TODAY**](#)

With your help, Consumers for Dental Choice can build on the string of successes we created from the wake of FDA's new amalgam policy.

The Two Largest Manufacturers Exit the Amalgam Business

For more than a decade, Consumers for Dental Choice has held news events in amalgam manufacturers' home cities ... organized petitions ... filed shareholder resolutions demanding that companies reconsider amalgam sales ... and urged the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to issue manufacturer guidance. But the industry dug in to defend its mercury product until ...

The FDA safety communication was the straw that broke the manufacturers' back. Consumers for Dental Choice and our allies followed up with letters to manufacturers signed by 118 environmental, consumer, and children's groups from across America and throughout the world.

Dentsply Sirona – one of the world's largest manufacturers of dental products – was the first to exit the amalgam market. In its annual report to the U.S. Securities and Exchange

Commission, this industry behemoth quietly noted:

"[W]e have discontinued sales for all amalgam products as of December 2020."

The coup de grâce for Dentsply appears to have been FDA's recommendation against amalgam use in high-risk. As Dentsply explained:

"In September 2020, the FDA issued an updated recommendation that certain people are at higher risk for health problems from mercury-containing amalgam dental fillings ..."

When Dentsply Sirona stopped its amalgam sales, we turned our attention to other manufacturers who persist in selling this mercury product. Then the other major U.S. amalgam manufacturer, Envista, which made amalgam under the name Kerr:

"... ceased manufacturing all Alloy products, including all of our amalgam products that may contain mercury."

In a letter to me, Envista/Kerr's lawyer provided details of its exit from amalgam:

"Specifically, we ceased manufacturing these products in the third quarter of 2021 and communicated this decision to our customers in November of 2021. As part of this communication, we cancelled many of our customers outstanding orders for amalgams containing mercury and directed our customers to our other materials that do not contain mercury. We also engaged in a vigorous campaign to assist our customers in swapping their amalgam products containing mercury to materials that do not contain mercury."

With Dentsply and Kerr out of the amalgam business, they can now focus on what they do best: developing and selling the many excellent mercury-free fillings available today!

Some Dental Schools Dropping Amalgam

Consumers for Dental Choice has always worked closely with dentists to abolish amalgam. Early on, only about 3% of dentists were mercury-free. We had to defend the

right of these mercury-free dentists to advise, advertise, and advocate for mercury-free dentistry. We had to win back the licenses of dentists who stood up against this toxic product.

We had to fight to get mercury-free dentists – who represent almost half of all dentists now! – appointed to state dental boards over the pro-mercury state dental associations' strenuous objections.

Now Consumers for Dental Choice is on the offensive, reaching out to dentists about FDA's new safety communication. We wrote an [article](#) in Dentistry Today, advising dentists that in light of FDA's amalgam safety communication, their only prudent course of action is to use only mercury-free fillings.

And we made sure that dental schools knew about FDA's new safety communication – and learned that some are stopping amalgam use in their clinics in response to FDA's recommendations.

In a huge and welcome break with tradition, dental schools across the nation, notably in California, Texas, and New England are going mercury-free! [Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine](#) ended the use of amalgam in patient care on 14 October 2020 in direct response to FDA's safety communication. As explained on its website:

“By eliminating dental amalgam from our Patient Treatment Centers, we are prioritizing the health and safety of our patients and fully embracing the future of dental restorations – while simultaneously doing our part to protect the environment,” said Dean Jeffrey W. Hutter.

Being amalgam-free means that the Boston University dental school is “ahead of the curve when it comes to trends in dentistry and oral healthcare.”

As more and more dental schools reject amalgam and embrace mercury-free materials, the next generation of dentists will be better prepared to not only save teeth but also

protect their patients and communities from the unnecessary exposure to amalgam's mercury.

Minamata Convention Is Amended to Protect Children Worldwide

Consumers for Dental Choice and our global team – the World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry – won an amalgam reduction requirement in the new Minamata Convention on Mercury in 2013. Every country that is party to this international environmental treaty must phase down its use of amalgam.

Now armed with the FDA's safety communication advising against amalgam use in high-risk populations, we knew it was time to ask the nations of the world to go further by amending the Minamata Convention to protect all children from amalgam.

Consumers for Dental Choice and our international allies undertook a multi-pronged campaign to lay the groundwork for passing the amalgam amendment: convincing the Minamata Secretariat that mercury-free alternatives to amalgam are feasible ... persuading the World Health Organization to acknowledge that an amalgam phase-out is possible ... sharing the science and practical policy solutions with governments from every region ... and battling misinformation from the propagandist World Dental Federation (FDI).

The mercury-free dentistry movement was present in force during the amendment debates in Bali, Indonesia in March 2022: I led a team of talented and energetic nonprofit group leaders and dental experts from Bangladesh, Cameroun, Germany, Great Britain, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, Uruguay, the United States, and Vietnam. And we succeeded!

On 25 March 2022, the parties to the Minamata Convention decided unanimously to amend the treaty to ...

“Exclude or not allow, by taking measures as appropriate, or recommend against the use of dental amalgam for the dental treatment of deciduous teeth

[baby teeth], of patients under 15 years and of pregnant and breastfeeding women.”

This new amendment represents a worldwide consensus that dental amalgam is not safe for children and other vulnerable populations – **not safe in their mouths and not safe in the environment.**

Consumers for Dental Choice salutes the nations of the Africa Region, which led the charge to win this amendment. We were honored to provide technical assistance as African countries built support for the proposed amendment and reached out to the 27-nation European Union, which was proposing its own amendment to strengthen the treaty’s amalgam reduction requirement.

With the new amendment now in effect, we succeeded in shifting the Minamata Convention’s emphasis from phasing down amalgam use to phasing out amalgam use, starting with the populations most susceptible to the neurotoxic effects of mercury!

The WHO Promotes Mercury-Free Options

The World Health Organization (WHO) has traditionally favored amalgam use – despite its risks to human health and the environment. But with even FDA now warning against unfettered use of this mercury product, WHO is now catching up with the science.

After conducting a consultation with dental policymakers from around the world, WHO concluded that ...

“Importantly, the 2021 informal global WHO consultation with policymakers in dental public health shows that phase-down – and even phase-out – of the use of dental amalgam is achievable.”

In a follow-up briefing paper, WHO touted the many benefits of mercury-free alternatives to amalgam, especially composite fillings:

“Composite resin can be applied using minimally invasive intervention procedures. Minimally invasive intervention involves treating cavitated carious lesions while preserving as much of the natural tooth structure as possible and avoiding unnecessary extraction and negative consequences ... Use of composite resin is cost-effective and potentially widely available, and it has low risks or adverse effects, based on intensive study over 60 years of use around the world.”

We agree – the mercury-free alternatives to amalgam have many advantages and the fact that these advantages are now recognized by WHO will help us as we move forward to an amalgam-free world!

More and More Countries Are Restricting Amalgam Use

We here at Consumers for Dental Choice used to be able to point to only two countries that phased out amalgam use: Sweden and Norway. But thanks to the international campaign carried out by our World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry team, the Minamata Convention, and the tailwinds of FDA’s amalgam safety communication, today we are seeing progress toward mercury-free dentistry worldwide:

- Countries that are phasing out amalgam use – Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Moldova, Nepal, Netherlands, New Caledonia, Norway, Philippines, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname, among others, have phased out amalgam use, announced plans for phasing out amalgam use, or use virtually no amalgam.
- Countries that are ending amalgam use in children – The entire European Union, Mauritius, Tanzania, and Vietnam have ended or are ending amalgam use in children specifically.
- Countries that are ending amalgam use in programs – Bangladesh’s and India’s armed forces, Indonesia’s and Poland’s government health insurance, and

Mongolia's ban on amalgam procurement are ending amalgam use in these government programs.

Private programs are ending amalgam use too, like the Cameroon Baptist Convention hospital system's network of dental clinics – which provided oral care to approximately 47,000 patients in 2016 – phased out amalgam use more than a decade ago.

We make sure that each country that ends or restricts amalgam use becomes a model for other countries – and as a result, the mercury-free dentistry movement is growing!

Help Us Get to the Finish Line

The FDA's safety communication recommending against amalgam use in high-risk populations has built significant momentum propelling our cause forward ... but there's still a long way to go. We've still got challenges ahead, including:

- Some companies persist in selling amalgam – and some, like Southern Dental Industries, are even targeting developing countries for their toxic product.
- Many government programs in the United States – such as Medicaid and the Indian Health Service – continue to place mercury fillings in children's mouths – despite FDA's warnings against amalgam use in this very population.
- The European Union amalgam regulation we won in 2017 not only banned amalgam use in children, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers, but also required the European Commission, its staff arm, to formally recommend for or against the end of amalgam.

The recommendation was to phase out amalgam; in 2022 the European Commission will issue its report on the feasibility and timetable for a phase out – and send the final decision to the European Parliament to resolve in 2023. **The showdown to ban all amalgam use in the 27-nation European Union has begun!**

We will not let any country – including the United States – take a pass on protecting everybody, especially our children, from dental mercury exposure. But we need your help ...

Your Help – Matched by Dr. Mercola – Is Making a Difference!

Consumers for Dental Choice is an amazing nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to advocating mercury-free dentistry. Our talented team of consumer advocates, environmentalists, and health professionals work tirelessly – and effectively – to continue the fight against dental mercury around the world.

This week – until midnight your time August 27 on line, or if mailed postmarked by August 29 – Dr. Mercola will double your donations up to \$150,000. Please help Consumers for Dental Choice get the funding we need to build on the momentum from the FDA safety communication. Click the button below to donate online or you may mail a check to ...

Consumers for Dental Choice
727 15th St. NW, Suite 701
Washington, DC 20005

DONATE TODAY

With your help, Consumers for Dental Choice's campaign for mercury-free dentistry has the momentum to stop the use of amalgam in dentistry.