

January Newsletter

Happy New Year to all of my colleagues in the dental society! I hope everyone enjoyed their holidays and had some much needed rest and relaxation and time with family and friends which is truly one of the greatest gifts during the holiday season. I hope that 2015 is starting out well for everyone and the new year's goals and resolutions are starting strong.

It is hard to believe that the 25th of this month marks the 70th anniversary of the first intentional fluoridation of a public drinking water supply system that took place in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1945. It began as a study conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service to study the effects of fluoride on the dentition and tooth decay. Children of all ages received examinations in dental facilities set up in classrooms all throughout the town of Grand Rapids. Children were followed for several years in the study to record the results and to see, or confirm as many had hoped, if fluoride was helping to reduce tooth decay, even though much research from the dental community had indicated that it did. Despite the data that began to show fluoride's effectiveness, it slowly became a very divisive political topic that continued to gain public awareness both for and against it. Many people and groups felt it that community water fluoridation should not be "forced" on the public, particularly as there were health concerns with its exposure, despite emerging research showing that these potential complications were in doses which significantly exceeded the dosage recommendations by the USPHS and fluoride experts. There were others who opposed the fluoridation simply because they wanted the choice. Many municipalities that fluoridated the water did so based on the premise that the need for the greater good superseded the dissension of a few, at least at the time, and as a result fluoridated their respected systems.

What is interesting to see is how the decisions to fluoridate the water were made, ballot referendum by the public or administrative action by the city council/municipality governing body, and in some cases a state mandate. Administrative action seemed to be the most effective method for fluoridation, and over several decades this trend continued with a smaller percentage of decisions for fluoridation via ballot referendum.

Despite the public health benefits, fluoridation remains a widely-debated political issue. And although other public health decisions were made based on the benefit to the greater good, such as the iodization of salt or the pasteurization of milk, they did not endure the same controversy that fluoridation continues to see today, albeit there were more possible complications to fluoride, which seem to be growing in popularity in our time now. But regardless of the camps that support or oppose fluoridation, or the discussions that we have with our patients, we do know that proper brushing and flossing and a healthy diet with reducing sugar intake are likely the most important factors for decreased tooth decay and a healthy dentition for our patients.

I hope that this newsletter finds everyone well and I look forward to seeing you in 2015.

Yours in Dentistry,

Jonathan S. Judd, DDS