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Hispanic Dental Association Endorses Community Fluoridation

Policy Position Date: 1/15/2012

Background

Fluoride is a naturally-occurring element found in all water sources, soils, and even in the food that is consumed. Water fluoridation is the process of adjusting the natural fluoride content of water to the optimum level that prevents tooth decay.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes water fluoridation as one of the 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century. More than 50 years of research has scientifically proven its safety and public health benefits, including the reduction and prevention of tooth decay. More than more than 100 national and international organizations have recognized the public health benefits of community water fluoridation.

In his 2004 report "[Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General](#)," Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona stated, "community water fluoridation continues to be the most cost-effective, equitable and safe means to provide protection from tooth decay in the community."

Surgeon General Carmona added:

- More than 170 million people, or 67 percent of the U.S. population served by water supplies, drink water with optimal fluoride levels for preventing decay.
- Of the 50 largest cities in the country, 43 are fluoridated.
- An economic analysis determined that in most communities every \$1 invested in fluoridation saves more than \$38 or more in treatment costs.

Optimal Level of Water Fluoridation

According to the U.S. Public Health Service, the optimal fluoridation level is between .7 milligrams and 1.2 milligrams of fluoride per liter of water. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has proposed a recommendation of 0.7 milligrams of fluoride per liter of water to replace the current recommended range of 0.7 to 1.2 milligrams.

Disparities

The Hispanic community continues to grow, composing 16% of the nation's population according to the Census and accounting for more than half (51%) of the United States' population growth of 9% since 2000, according to the Pew Hispanic Center. Because the mission of the Hispanic Dental Association works toward the elimination of oral health disparities in the Hispanic community, the benefits of community water fluoridation (CWF) to aid in the reduction of disparities in tooth decay is critical to the HDA's endorsement of community water fluoridation. A recent HDA study conducted to measure Hispanic oral health revealed:

- 30% of Hispanics do not know, or incorrectly believe to be true, that cavities will go away on their own if you brush regularly, and
- 30% of Hispanics regularly visit the dentist.

Moreover, Hispanics emigrating from Latin American countries to the U.S. do not have water fluoridation, which provides a cultural awareness barrier to proper oral health. As a result, they rely on hydration from sources other than water (for example, sodas). Therefore, CWF helps reduce disparities in tooth decay prevalence. Surgeon General Carmona affirmed this



stating, “Fluoridation is the single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay and improve oral health over a lifetime, for both children and adults.”

HDA Position

Therefore, it is the position of the Hispanic Dental Association to:

1. Endorse community water fluoridation in all communities—especially the Hispanic and underserved communities—as a safe, beneficial and cost-effective public health measure based on science for preventing dental caries and to aid in the reduction of oral health disparities.
2. Recommend all communal water supplies to achieve an optimal fluoridation level of at least .7 milligrams of fluoride per liter of water.
3. Encourage local dental and/or oral health societies and the community at-large, to work with state and local governments and their agencies, in support of community water fluoridation.
4. Call on Surgeon General Regina M. Benjamin to follow in the footsteps of her predecessors who since the 1950s have issued a statement in support for community water fluoridation.