

Eliminating the Medical Sources of Childhood Methylmercury Exposure

Passed by the House of Delegates, Illinois State Medical Society, April 12, 2003

Whereas The American Public Health Association in 1999 noted that: methylmercury adversely affects the nervous and reproductive systems of humans and some wildlife that the developing brain is considered more susceptible to methylmercury exposure than are adult brains; and that the developing brain appears to be most sensitive while in utero; may also cross the placenta easily to produce neurodevelopmental deficits, including cerebral palsy and mental retardation, as well as developmental delays that may be latent in infancy and manifest only later in childhood; and when inorganic mercury is released into the environment, microbial biotransformation produces methylmercury, and that public health warnings to avoid or limit fish consumption due to methylmercury contamination are commonplace in the United States with special emphasis on pregnant women

Whereas The American Medical Association recently adopted policy encouraging efforts to minimize or eliminate mercury use in hospitals and other health care facilities; and pledging to participate in coalitions with appropriate federal agencies and health care organizations to educate physicians and other health care professionals about suitable alternatives to the use of mercury and mercury-containing devices and the appropriate disposal of mercury and mercury-containing devices (Sub. Res. 418, I-92; Appended: Sub. Res. 410, A-00; Reaffirmation I-00)

Whereas despite some continuing controversy over the use of aneroid sphygmomanometers and the need for regular maintenance and calibration, Daniel Jones, MD and colleagues in their recent commentary in JAMA concluded that "Clinicians can likely assume that blood pressure measurement with a well-calibrated aneroid manometer should yield the same results as measurement with a mercury manometer." (February 26, 2003, 289:8, P. 1027-30)

And, Whereas the American Hospital Association, US Environmental Protection Agency, Health Care Without Harm, and the American Nurses Association have partnered to form Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (<http://www.h2e-online.org>) to support programs for the virtual elimination of mercury from hospital waste through use of mercury-free alternative ; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Illinois State Medical Society supports efforts to reduce and if possible eliminate mercury use in health care facilities; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Illinois State Medical Society ask the American Medical Association to join with it in partnering with the AHA, USEPA, HCWH, and the ANA to educate physicians and other health care professionals about this topic.