

cies based on biased science. "We have found that the conclusions drawn by promoters are not supported by the hard data," she says.

Most of the fluoride used for water fluoridation is industrial waste: sodium fluoride, sodium fluorosilicate and fluorosilicic acid from phosphate fertilizer, glass, steel and aluminum production. Unlike organic fluorine, these compounds come with pollutant hitchhikers that get a free ride into public water supplies. Rather than paying to dispose of these compounds as hazardous waste, industries sell them to public water utilities.

Injecting hazardous industrial waste into the public water supply without FDA regulation is, in Campbell's view, a recipe for disaster. "Forcing populations to ingest a medication laced with lead and arsenic, a known carcinogen, is antithetical to health," she says. "Especially for children."

Beyond the question of fluoride's effects

ppm can be toxic to invertebrates, and UO chemistry professor Paul Engelking maintains that even low concentrations of fluoride in rivers are harmful to salmonids. "I and my students have been measuring the levels of fluoride in Oregon waters since [1997]," Engelking wrote in a letter to former Gov. John Kitzhaber, an avid fly fisherman who supports fluoridation. "We now know with certainty that in some locations, the levels we have measured are high enough to affect fish and other aquatic organisms."

OREGON'S LOW DOSE

In the 1920s, a dentist named Dr. Frederick McKay noticed that many of his patients in Colorado Springs, Colo., had brown stains mottling their teeth — but they had fewer cavities than most. Research in the 1930s revealed that naturally occurring fluoride in the water likely caused both effects.

'There's a difficulty in nailing down the facts on these issues. There are a lot of questions as to whether the potential adverse effects of fluoride outweigh the potential benefits. In the end, given the uncertainties, a lot of people thought we should leave this to the communities to decide.'

— Sen. Charlie Ringo, chair, Senate Environment and Land Use Committee

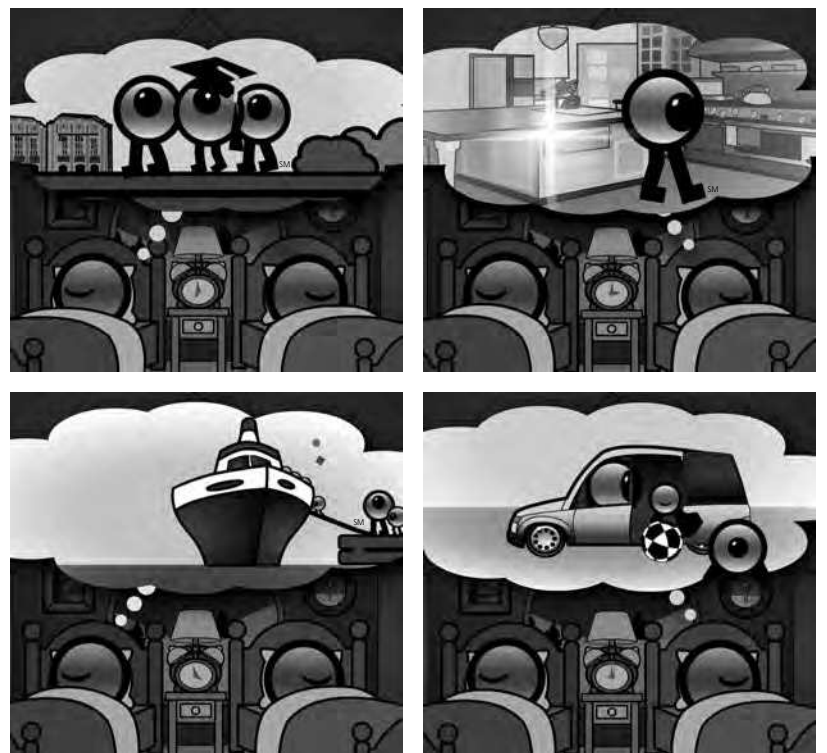
on the human body is its impacts on the environment. As with other issues related to fluoride, credible scientists have different opinions.

A report published in the September 2004 issue of *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health* concludes that fluoridation of the public water supply is safe for the environment as well as for people. But Environment Canada found that fluoride levels higher than 0.12

Studies in other communities followed in the '40s, and by early '50s, with the blessing of the Public Health Service, dozens of cities were rushing to fluoridate. Today, 60 percent of Americans drink fluoridated water.

But Oregon, with only one in five residents drinking fluoridated water, is proving to be among the states most resistant to fluoridation. Only Utah and Hawaii have lower fluoridation rates.

Currently in Oregon, the decision to



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FLUORIDE'S RUN THROUGH SALEM

A chronology of fluoride action this legislative session

Fall 2004: The Oregon Health Policy Commission recommends a state mandate on water fluoridation.

Feb. 24, 2005: Senate Bill 852 (the Water Quality Assurance Act), requiring the Food and Drug Administration's approval for all substances being added to the public water supply, is referred to the Senate's Environment and Land Use Committee, chaired by Sen. Charlie Ringo (D-Beaverton).

March 7, 2005: House Bill 2426, declaring a dental health emergency and allowing dental hygienists to prescribe fluoride, passes unanimously through the House and is referred to the Senate Health Policy committee.

March 29, 2005: House Bill 2025, requiring cities with more than 10,000 residents to add fluoride to the public water supply, passes in the House by a 36-22 vote. The bill is referred to the Senate's Environment and Land Use Committee.

April 2005: The committee holds public hearings on HB 2025, HB 2426 and SB 852. Proponents and opponents of fluoridation offer vehement testimony.

April 21, 2005: HB 2426 passes unanimously in the Senate.

May 2005: Former Gov. John Kitzhaber, current Gov. Ted Kulongoski and the Healthy Smiles Coalition encourage a state mandate on fluoridation. Numerous environmental groups and Oregon city governments oppose it, urging the Senate to keep fluoridation under local control.

May 13, 2005: Kulongoski signs HB 2426 into law.

June 2005: The Environment and Land Use Committee closes for the session without reaching resolutions on pro-fluoridation bill HB 2025 or anti-fluoridation bill SB 852.

— Kera Abraham