

## Nau mai, haere mai,

Kia ora e hoa and welcome to the fourth issue of On Tap, the National Fluoridation Information Service's e-newsletter. Because it is a little late you will find it packed full of useful information and links including our new Six Month Review of the latest literature [www.NFIS.org.nz](http://www.NFIS.org.nz) under 2012 Reviews and Reports.

Are you aware of the Annual Report on Drinking-water Quality? The 2010-2011 report can be found at <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/annual-review-drinking-water-quality-new-zealand-2010-2011>. This report describes drinking-water quality for all registered community drinking-water supplies serving populations of more than 100 people. It describes how community drinking-water supplies met the requirements of the Drinking-water Standards for New Zealand. Fluoride is considered in the chemical compliance section of the report and the tables reporting chemical compliance on pages 53-77. Please talk with your local Drinking Water Assessors to get an understanding of what the report means for your area.

## WAVING MY FLAG FOR FLUORIDE

**A way to discuss community water fluoridation, a personal reflection from Bronwyn Beavon.**

I will never forget the conversation I had with a local dentist within the first few weeks of starting my role as an oral health promoter. Having little oral health knowledge, but a background in nutrition, and the responsibility of establishing this new role from scratch I set out in search of direction – how did others see this position best benefiting our community? From a man who makes his living from fixing decayed teeth I was expecting him to say something along the lines of “by promoting regular dental check ups”, so you can understand my surprise when he encouraged me to pursue the issue of community water fluoridation.



As the most intensively researched public health intervention ever, it's hard to miss the fact that community water fluoridation is one of the “best buys” for the health of a community. A bargain hunter by nature, I was not happy to learn that since 1985, my community of Timaru District, had clearly been ripped off!

So, as an Oral Health Promoter, what is my role and responsibility in promoting water fluoridation? To me, the answer is clear ... I would be doing myself, the Ministry of Health but most importantly my community a disservice if I didn't.

Don't get me wrong, I'm don't rally the troops and march down the street with placards but I do seek opportunities to inform my community of the safety and efficacy of community water fluoridation.

Here are some approaches I have taken:

- ♦ Written articles for the local community newspapers, using topical events such as World Oral Health Day, Easter or Christmas to not only share good oral hygiene tips but also to promote fluoridated toothpaste and community water fluoridation. These articles are

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often followed by a rush of 'letters to the editor' authored mainly by our local anti-fluoride campaigners. One article I wrote resulted in the largest number of responses the chief reporter had experienced during her time with the paper! I avoid entering into debates on these occasions choosing only to respond when necessary – the National Fluoridation Information Service can prove very valuable here!

- ◆ Waiting room displays - people waiting, nothing to do – what an opportunity! Displays have proven very effective at delivering key oral health messages to a captive audience. I regularly post displays in our community & hospital dental clinics and Public Health Nurse clinic rooms and the feedback from the clinicians in the area has been fantastic.
- ◆ Submissions. Our District Council recently released their 10 year Long Term Plan and although this didn't specifically address the issue of community water fluoridation I was able to find a priority area to "link" it in with. Key here is keeping it relevant and related to the Council's aims and not forgetting of course that Councils have a "duty ...to improve, promote and protect public health" under section 23 of the Health Act.

Who knows what opportunity will present itself next but whatever it is, I'll be ready and waiting to wave my flag for fluoride!

If you want to use/view any of the newspaper articles I have written please visit [nfis.org.nz](http://nfis.org.nz) – and if you have any other tips or information you think would like to share please let Emmeline or Kathie know - after all "many hands make light work!"

◆ WRITTEN BY BRONWYN BEAVON, DIETITIAN & ORAL HEALTH PROMOTER, COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH, TIMARU

## Frequently Asked Questions



Over the past few months we have been working on creating short and to-the-point answers to frequently asked questions. The answers are written in plain English and provide a response that you can easily share with others.

These resources are in the pre-testing phase, we will be calling people within DHBs and Councils to discuss the design and content fit, are these too brief or are they suitable for the purpose.

If you would like to provide constructive feedback please email this to [nfis@huttvalleydhb.org.nz](mailto:nfis@huttvalleydhb.org.nz) thank you.

## FAST FLUORIDE FACTS

In 2011 approximately 56% of New Zealanders were receiving fluoridated drinking water.

Whakatane District Council, and Hastings District council are holding referendums about whether to continue with their community water fluoridation programmes during their 2013 local body elections.

Ruapehu District Council and New Plymouth District Council decided to end their community water fluoridation programmes in Taumarunui after 29 years and the New Plymouth district after 41 years.

Despite pressure from opposition groups Lower Hutt City Council and Dunedin City Council have decided to continue with community water fluoridation.

Waikato District Council is considering expanding their community water fluoridation programme.

Clutha District Council commenced community water fluoridation in Tapanui and Milton in late 2010, and in Kaitangata in February 2011. The Ranfurly Community Board in the Central Otago District Council agreed to commence water fluoridation and are expected to have fluoride added to their water supplies in late 2012 after the instalment of the necessary equipment and monitoring systems.

Fluoridegate Legal Action NZ, a subsidiary of Fluoride Action Network New Zealand (FANNZ) wrote to all councils in New Zealand who currently have community water fluoridation programmes. They stated they were issuing a formal notice of legal action if the councils continued to add fluoride to their water supplies. The Ministry of Health found the letter had no legal standing.

1. This calculation is based on the population currently on fluoridated drinking water approximately 2,272,832 (MoH) divided by the total New Zealand population counted in the 2006 census of 4,027,947.

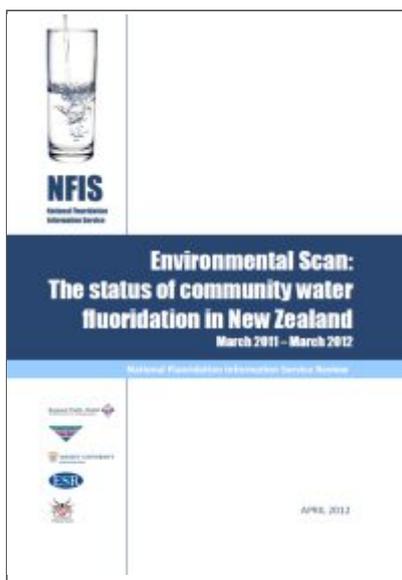
2. Hamilton City Council was to have a referendum in 2013 but on the 8th June Council withdrew funding for the referendum and referred the decision to the Strategy and Policy Committee.

# Environmental Scan 2012

The 2012 environmental scan follows on from one completed in Feb 2011 as part of the establishment phase of the National Fluoridation Information Service.

The status of community water fluoridation (CWF) continued to fluctuate around the country between March 2011 and April 2012. Check out the 'Fast Facts' section of On Tap to see which councils have added or stopped adding fluoride to their water supplies over the year. The environmental scan <http://www.rph.org.nz/content/e7777d2b-b28f-4922-8e27-64f3d39a9e4f.cmr> highlights the complexity involved with decision making on this issue by councillors. There are varying viewpoints between and within councils and decision making attempts have involved a fine balance between political, public health, and democratic responsibilities and interests.

The group opposing community water fluoridation, Fluoride Action Network New Zealand (FANNZ) have a coordinated approach often using multiple copies of the same submission to apply pressure on councillors during annual planning processes. They are well organised and often passionate about their views regardless of where accepted scientific evidence stands on the issue. A subsidiary, Fluoridegate Legal Action NZ, wrote to all councils in late 2011 which currently have a community water fluoridation programme stating they were issuing formal notice of legal action if the councils continued to add fluoride to their water supplies. The Ministry of Health found the letter had no legal standing, however the threat of legal action for collective and individual liability with the potential costs to ratepayers may have served to intimidate many councillors.



Studies have shown that the most successful outcomes for community water fluoridation programmes come about through a goal of broad community engagement. This involves a strategy of resourceful and varied approaches of information provision so that true community engagement is harnessed to achieve effective decision making. Campaigns that have successfully engaged the community in the past in Australia and New Zealand have involved a combination of approaches including media reporting of factual information, the engagement of community organisations, public forums and independent household surveys on randomly selected household. NFIS is working with District Health Boards and, to a lesser extent, councils to encourage such an approach so councillors can receive their mandate from a broad section of the community rather than from an impassioned and persistent few.

## References

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## Waimarama

BY EMMELINE HAYMES

In our responsive work the Service has had a few queries recently from Public Health Units where District Health Boards or their members appear puzzled over how their governance role relates to Community Water Fluoridation (CWF), and particularly whether District Health Boards have a policy setting or policy implementation role in relation to CWF.

To answer these queries we have been doing some research on the legislation and contracting governing the work of District Health Boards and particularly what they have signed up to in terms of the service specifications of their Public Health Units. It is quite a complex issue so we are preparing a separate briefing paper to clarify for District Health Boards what their role and legal responsibilities. We will circulate this to you separately as soon as it is complete. This will be followed later in the year by clarification of the role and legal responsibilities of Territorial Authorities in relation to CWF.

[www.NFIS.org.nz](http://www.NFIS.org.nz)



RPH have a brand new website so you will notice a few changes on our NFIS webpage.

**NFIS Documents** All documents completed by our consortium are posted on this page and available in PDF format. There is a quick link to our On Tap newsletters as well as all our planning documents, advisories, and reports and reviews.

**FAQS** Brief and concise answers to frequently asked questions. The answers are written in plain English and provide a response that you can easily share with others. These are available as PDF documents suitable for printing.

**Shared Learning's** This page provides a hub for powerpoints and other resources that Medical Officers of Health, Dentists, Iwi and others have used at presentations to Councils.

**New website additions include:**

-  [Six Month Review of the latest scientific literature](#)
-  [Environmental Scan](#)
-  [Advisory on how different household water treatment systems for fluoride removal work](#)
-  [FAQs](#)

## CONSORTIUM PARTNER

Introducing...

## DR NEIL STEPHEN

Dr Neil Stephen is Clinical Head of Department for Hutt Valley Community Dental Services and has been working in this role for seven years. Community Dental Services provides dental services to school age children in the greater Wellington region and hospital dental care in the Hutt Valley.



Neil brings clinical and service delivery perspectives to the NFIS consortium. He sees on a day to day basis the impact and importance of community water fluoridation (CWF) programmes. Neil's up to date knowledge of local dental statistics and his experience of the "real world" of children's dental issues provides an invaluable contextual contribution to the development of NFIS resources as does his service planning knowledge.

Neil says local conditions for community based dental services throughout New Zealand can be quite different. One variable is the extent of CWF within the communities they serve. This variability means dental services must plan and allocate resources effectively accounting for the effects of such variations. For example communities with good access to CWF continue to have better teeth compared with similar ethnic and socioeconomic groups in communities without access to CWF, an important factor in considering how to configure local dental services. Clinical Heads of Departments and Service Managers need to think about this when working out how much resource to allocate to community based resources and how much resource to retain for hospital based resources such as surgical dental care.

Research shows that communities with good access to CWF have better teeth for groups of similar ethnic and socioeconomic deprivation when compared to similar groups within non-fluoridated communities. This is an important factor in consideration of how dental services in the regions are designed.



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