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**Kathy Cooper**

**From:** Gene Barr [gbarr@pachamber.org]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 03, 2006 11:26 AM  
**To:** Jewett, John H.; Smith, James M.; IRRRC  
**Subject:** Mercury

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 INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
 REVIEW COMMISSION

Gentleman:

Wanted to make the two of you aware of two recent studies completed that address the issue of mercury in fish. Both present strong evidence that the health benefits of eating fish significantly outweigh whatever minimal risk exists from the mercury in that fish.

The first report was issued by the Harvard School of Public Health and found that eating fish reduced the risk of heart disease and other diseases. The lead author of the study was also quoted in news reports speaking to the health risks of mercury in fish stating "We were surprised at how little evidence there actually is for some of these harms."

A second study found largely the same health benefits and relatively insignificant risks. This report issued by the Institute of Medicine and funded by the Food and Drug Administration and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found benefits to the heart and benefits to intellectual development of children. One official with NOAA was quoted as saying that public concerns about the risks are "overblown" and based on "fear and misinformation."

These studies corroborate the results from the Seychelles Islands study which found no adverse health in women (or their children) despite eating a significant amount of fish, and the Centers for Disease Control which failed to find a single person in the US with levels of mercury in their blood high enough to cause health problems. In light of all this information, it is plausible to argue that the mis-information put out by certain groups actually has a negative health impact by discouraging people from eating fish.

To that point, many of those groups pushing for a state specific mercury rule have claimed that US EPA and the FDA have stated that 600,000 women have unsafe levels of mercury in their blood. I have searched the website of these respective organizations and can find no such statements. In speaking with an EPA official, I was told the official pronouncement is that as many as 300,000 women of childbearing age may have an elevated level of risk from mercury. That is a far cry from the statements that certain groups have used to drive this issue. These statements about the 600,000 number have come from an employee of EPA, acting on her own, and are not the official position of EPA.

The CDC comments on this are well documented and if you don't have them I will be happy to provide them. I think it is fair to ask these other groups to provide similar documentation for their comments.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. Please let me know if you have additional questions.

Gene Barr

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