



**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01376**

### Name of petitioner

James McDonald

### Petition title

Ban the presence of free methanol in all manufactured products in our diets.

### Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to urge the Scottish Government to take necessary action to bring about a ban on the use of free methanol released by aspartame and to run an awareness campaign amongst health professionals to alert them of free methanol present in our diet.

### Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

I attended a Food Standards Agency Scotland (SFSA) meeting in Dundee in September 2009 and found the committee almost totally ignorant of aspartame and certainly no one knew of the dangers from the methanol. None of the minutes of Food Standards Agency Committee meetings since SFSA was first formed in April 2000 carried any mention of aspartame at all, yet 2 members of the SFSA sit on the UK FSA committee and there has been at least 4 reviews of the safety of aspartame by it and the SFSA in that period.

As a devolved matter, I believe the Scottish people should have been warned that the safety of a food product was under review and our medical profession advised that we are all consuming methanol on a daily basis. We need to know Scotland's official position on aspartame or have we abdicated total responsibility for it to London?

We have been in constant communications with both the FSA and EFSA since early 2009 including a meeting in October 2009 at their London offices. Present were six delegates from the UK Aspartame Awareness Campaign (UKAAC) and seven senior scientists from the FSA including two toxicologists and a SFSA representative, Stewart Herd. We presented them with new evidence regarding the metabolism of the free methanol from aspartame and challenged the current ADI (Approved Daily Intake) of aspartame of 40mg/kg as being 35 times too high for safety. At the meeting we requested the ban on methanol and of informing the medical profession about the methanol consumption, both of which they totally ignored.

At a UK level, I have written to—

- Two chief executives of FSA, Lord Rooker who referred me straight back to FSA and Tim Smith with whom I am in correspondence now
- The UK Chief Medical Officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, two letters without the courtesy of a reply
- The then Labour UK Government health minister and health secretary and the current health minister, Andrew Lansley MP – all of whom referred me straight back to the FSA.

There is a glass ceiling over the FSA and they are untouchable because they are scientists, they investigate themselves and consider only scientific opinions – this is very unhealthy when considering the health of the nation.

It is almost impossible to get to the UK Government so I approached the SFSA and found it was totally ignorant of the presence of aspartame/methanol in our diet. I was very disappointed with a letter I received back after posing questions to it on the metabolism of methanol.

I have not contacted the Scottish Government at all but have been advised by my MSP Mr Alex Fergusson that a petition would be the correct way forward.

## Petition background information

We are the “UK Aspartame awareness Campaign” started by my brother and I in 2008 after “discovering” Aspartame. We are a group of seven campaigners internationally connected to others in the USA, NZ, EU. We are totally independent and have no outside funding. We have the support of two UK professors who take a back seat because the FSA is in the firing line and aspartame is the product.

Aspartame has been used in our food for the last 28 years yet is virtually unknown to consumers, our GPs or medical professionals. Its breakdown product, free methanol, has been slowly poisoning us over all this time and our GPs and other medical staff have been denied the knowledge to help us – the Food Standards Agency says it is safe! This is a link to the FSA website where the official statement of the “safety” of aspartame is laid out. It contains great details of how they rely on other peoples studies to ‘prove’ this—

[www.food.gov.uk/safereating/chemsafe/additivesbranch/sweeteners/55174](http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/chemsafe/additivesbranch/sweeteners/55174)

Evidence of this harm to the population is being seen as more and more cases of what the FSA calls “anecdotal reports” are reported to us (UKAAC). The symptoms reported in these reports are the same as for methanol poisoning. The FSA regards these harrowing real life accounts of people’s suffering as unreliable (see links to the FSA website – please read comments from aspartame sufferers—

[http://blogs.food.gov.uk/science/entry/Anecdotal\\_evidence\\_and\\_aspartame](http://blogs.food.gov.uk/science/entry/Anecdotal_evidence_and_aspartame)

[http://blogs.food.gov.uk/science/entry/Anecdotes\\_science\\_and\\_aspartame#comments](http://blogs.food.gov.uk/science/entry/Anecdotes_science_and_aspartame#comments))

In the US aspartame is consumed at a level 25% higher than in the UK, they have many tens of thousands of cases of “anecdotal evidence” reports which appeared much earlier there than the UK.- we are now catching up

Methanol is a very dangerous metabolic poison in man, slowly and silently building up in our bodies eventually causing serious organ, tissue and neurological problems (methanol poisoning) Due to the very small chronic daily amounts of methanol consumed and the wide range of human resistance to the poison, symptoms can take from 1-20 years to appear. The metabolism of methanol in the human body is—  
Methanol > Formaldehyde > Formic acid >Co2 > H2o

It is the formaldehyde and formic acid which causes methanol poisoning.

“No one should be consuming methanol in any quantity, it is far too dangerous”  
(Woodrow C. Monte PhD, Professor Emeritus of food Science and Nutrition, Arizona State University, Tempe AZ)

This situation in the UK has been brought about by a serious mistake made by the Committee on Toxicology (COT) in 1982 when it failed to include the severe metabolic toxicity of the free methanol delivered from aspartame, when it first approved it for use in our food. Because of this they set an incorrect Approved Daily Intake (ADI) of 40mg/kg. – The COT Report 1992:

<http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotreports/cotcomcocannreps/cotcomcocrep1992>

COT preceded the FSA and was responsible when aspartame was first approved in 1982. COT is still in existence in a quiet background roll for the FSA and is at present

examining the metabolism of free methanol. If it is not aware of it now, how could it possibly approve aspartame safe in 1982 without the vital knowledge of the severe metabolic toxicology of the Methanol, which constitutes 10% of aspartame?

ADI is a standard measure of the relative toxicity of a product; it is the amount of that product scientists have decreed an adult human can consume daily without harm - in the case of aspartame that is 40mg/kg. The ADI should be based on sound scientific knowledge of the toxicity of all the constituents of a product and scientific studies supplied by the manufacturer to substantiate that safety. There is no scientific data anywhere to support the intentional presence of free Methanol in the human body as being safe, however, there is plenty warning against it; When the toxicity of free methanol in aspartame is included, the ADI of aspartame is 1.14mg/kg – 35 times lower than FSA figure. We have challenged FSA on this; they have never contested my calculations nor commented one way or another (see calculations set out in submission PE1376/A).

COT, FSA and EFSA believe that the human body handles the free methanol released from aspartame in the same way as it does for methanol found in nature from some fruits and vegetables. This is very wrong. If it were true all vegetarians would get sick very quickly from methanol poisoning and we would have no vegans. We are currently challenging FSA to provide us with the science that supports this belief.

The European Food Standards Authority (EFSA) is not convinced that aspartame is safe. After a two year review of the safety of aspartame which commenced in 2008, delegates at its 36th Advisory Forum meeting in May 2010 did not endorse their own scientific experts recommendation that aspartame was still safe [www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/af0911110-m.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/af0911110-m.pdf) (Item 6.4). It deferred any further consideration until the results of the FSA pilot study are available in early 2011. The experts recommended aspartame safe even after admitting in their November 2009 meeting minutes that they did not know enough about the metabolism of aspartame or methanol. [www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/af100519-m.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/af100519-m.pdf) Items 6 & 7.

After “discovering” aspartame in 2008, we researched answers to the questions—

1 How could COT/FSA approve as a food product, anything that delivers 10% of its weight in free methanol?

2 How could they calculate an accurate ADI if methanol and its severe metabolic toxicity had not been included.?

The answers were simple - they did not consider the severe metabolic toxicity of the free methanol at all and subsequently got the ADI wrong. Our conclusions did not come from a lengthy new scientific study; rather it was discovered by reference to old science publically available but not considered during the approval and COT/FSA/EFSA documents. We challenged the FSA in 2009 to answer these conclusions and to date they have not been able to do so.

In 1982 COT believed that the free methanol delivered from aspartame is handled by the body in the same way as for methanol in nature from fruits and vegetables and they are still of this opinion today (so far) because of this belief, the mistake they made, was not to look further at any possible toxic effects form methanol even though it constituted 10% of aspartame. We believe this to have been a gross dereliction of their duty of care to the British people. As part of our challenge, we have asked them to provide details of the scientific evidence which supports their belief on how the body handles free methanol the same as in nature – they have so far been unable to do this.

We have presented FSA/EFSA with details of our ADI which includes the toxicity of Methanol, giving an ADI for Aspartame of 1.14mg/kg – 35 times lower than theirs at 40mg/kg. Neither FSA nor EFSA have challenged our ADI - just hoping we will go away. The implication of this is that not only are we consuming free methanol daily in our diet and it is hurting us, we are consuming it at a level which can be demonstrated is 35 times higher than it should be.

What this means is that without the critical knowledge to include the severe metabolic Toxicity of the 10% free methanol released from aspartame, all COT/FSA/EFSA

scientists approval, reviews, opinions, studies or any other considerations of the safety of aspartame from 1982 to date, must be suspect therefore unsafe or in fact null and void. Therefore aspartame/ free methanol has never been proven safe as a safe food.

A new study by Professor Soffrittie, published in the American Journal of Industrial Medicine, claims feeding aspartame to male Swiss mice produced Liver and lung cancers and concluded—

“On the basis of these results, together with previous carcinogenicity bioassays conducted on rats in our laboratories, Aspartame should be considered a multiple site, trans-species carcinogenic agent. A re-evaluation of the current regulations on Aspartame remains, in our opinion, urgent” ([www.mpwhi.com/soffritti\\_2010\\_20896\\_fta.pdf](http://www.mpwhi.com/soffritti_2010_20896_fta.pdf))

Although the FSA has effectively been split up, we are still left with the serious problems of our daily consumption of methanol through aspartame and our medical professional's ignorance of the danger it poses.

According to the EFSA from the last review of aspartame safety, the consumer groups most vulnerable to the ADI of 40mg/kg (which is 35times too high already) is our children and the highest consumers of aspartame/methanol are diabetics. [www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/af100423.htm](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/af100423.htm)

We believe sick people should be treated by their GPs' not scientists. The pilot study being carried out at Hull University (see above) is the FSA's answer to try and get people to react to consuming aspartame under laboratory conditions - they are asking them to eat a cereal bar laced with aspartame or a placebo and record the results. UKAAC advised them at the London meeting in October 2009 that it was a dangerous practice and they might just make someone very ill. We also predicted it would most likely fail for want of volunteers as we know anyone who is a fast reactor to aspartame is very unlikely to take it voluntarily. The study has been trying to attract sufficient volunteers since June 2009 and to date has been unable to do so. We have also stated that the lack of volunteers is not an indication that the UK does not have a methanol problem, nor does it in any way prove aspartame safe - The EFSA is relying on the results of this study in 2011, to decide the continued safety or not of aspartame!

People who have been consuming large amounts of this sweetener are getting ill but do not know the reason why. Their GP does not know they are consuming a daily drip feed of free methanol in their diets so cannot take this into consideration during diagnosis. We believe GPs' should be in the forefront of any examination of the effects of consuming free methanol in our diet, they have all the information required in their existing records and we should be looking for sick people. They know the patients who do not respond to treatments or have totally confusing symptoms. They know which of them are addicted to diet soft drinks and all those who are going through panic attacks, severe memory loss and clinical depression, also how many of their young patients hyper active - all the evidence is there.

We offered the FSA an alternative to its dangerous pilot study but it told us it was flawed and ignored us. Our alternative is called the “TEAS” study and it is cheap, simple and would be completed in a period of 3 months delivering 10,000 independent results from 1,000 GPs' (this was for the whole of the UK) - the same study could be done for Scotland with 100 GPs'. TEAS means simply The Elimination of Aspartame Study. One of the key features of anecdotal reports without exception is, when a sufferer “discovers” aspartame and realises it could be that which is causing them harm but as soon as they stop “using” aspartame some symptoms disappear immediately or are significantly better within days. Recovery depends primarily on an individual's personal resistance to methanol and aspartame's other constituents, also the type of product they were consuming and in what quantities. However in practice it has been found that monitoring a 3 month abstinence period, shows significant results, on which a national roll out of information and extension of the study could be based.

We believe when GPs' are exposed to the knowledge that all their patients are daily consuming free methanol in their diets they will join us in demanding a ban: More information is available on our website: [www.Aspartame-Awareness-Campaign.co.uk](http://www.Aspartame-Awareness-Campaign.co.uk)

**Unique web address**

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01376>

**Related information for petition**

**Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?**

NO

**How many signatures have you collected so far?**

20

**Closing date for collecting signatures online**

N/A

**Comments to stimulate online discussion**