



UK Aspartame Awareness Campaign

Remove Methanol from your Diet and improve your HEALTH

www.Aspartame-Awareness-Campaign.co.uk

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Chris Hynd
Committee Assistant
Public Petitions Committee
Scottish Parliament by e-mail
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25th August 2011

Dear Mr Hynd,

Ref: PE1376 – Response by Professor Michael Lean on the question of methanol inhibitors in natural fruits and vegetables.

It will not escape the Committees notice that Professor Lean makes no attempt to address the question put to him by Nigel Don, which was to identify if he can, any other inhibitors other than ethanol and pectin in fruits and vegetables, which protect us from the metabolism of natural methanol; instead he, like Professor Milne, unsuccessfully tries to justify the FSA claim that the methanol in aspartame is safe to consume for a lifetime without harm.

I also declare Professor Lean a hostile contributor to our deliberations:-

1) I am well aware of the editorial he and Ms Hankey wrote to the BMJ (British Medical Journal) in 2004, which was heavily commented on – please read the comments to get a more balanced view. It is perplexing how Professor Lean (and his co-author) managed to write an editorial that seemed to take aspartame's safety so unquestionably, in the face of considerable scientific evidence to the contrary.

2) On 12th June 2011 Professor Lean lists the following project funding on his website:-

Food Standards Agency Scotland (2009 – 2011) - £185,223
Food Standards Agency (2007 – 2010) - £645,850

I had considered letting Professor Leans response go without detailed challenge but it contains so much mis-information it was not possible. For the benefit of the committee, I have reproduced Prof. Lean's response below and have added my own comments in blue parentheses.

I'm sure the committee will make its own mind up whether our petition has merit or not without the help of Prof. Lean. The Scottish people (unlike the rest of Britain) are fortunate to have the opportunity through the PPC to get difficult questions asked, and can hopefully bypass the revolving door system which sends all questions back into the arms of the FSA who enjoy the unfettered luxury of investigating themselves, and have the unstinting belief that their scientific opinion can be the only one, we have seen this happening already in the written submissions (D & G) from the Scottish Chief medical Officer who of course relies on the advice of the FSA.

This begs the question- Who is left to take the precautionary stance and say WAIT! This could possibly be real new evidence, challenging the safety of aspartame for the first time in 29 years; perhaps we should take a look at it? The FSA on whom we are all compelled to rely on for the safety of our food have had our new evidence for two years; rather than investigate our claims they have suppressed and ignored them. In doing so they have denied the Scottish people the right to be informed, that a food additive whose safety has been constantly challenged was again under investigation, and that one of its component methanol could be poisoning them. In this respect, the Scottish FSA has abrogated its devolved responsibility to the Scottish people by relying solely on FSA Westminster instructions.

The question of methanol in our food has moved on a pace in the last 6 months. The FSA is now out of step with the majority of Europe in still declaring aspartame safe; Europe is not convinced. There is mounting concern in Europe (see my Comments in Prof. Leak's submission) about the methanol in aspartame specifically the approval process, the setting of an ADI and the implications of methanol/ Formaldehyde as a cause of cancer.

Our latest new evidence that the methanol in the NOAEL of aspartame could kill a human has made redundant all the scientific arguments of how the body handles methanol, the question now is; Because of its methanol content, is aspartame too dangerous and should it never have been approved in the first place?

Our objectives for this petition have not changed; FSA Scotland will no doubt be supporting FSA Westminster in its "aspartame is safe" stance, against the scepticism in Europe - Scotland of course should be making its own mind up. We have debated this petition I believe successfully against the might of the FSA scientists whom we can prove were negligent in their Duty of Care to the British people in 1982 to the detriment of our health ever since (evidenced by anecdotal reports)

We are concerned about the revolving door system and glass bubble the FSA is allowed to operate within; where aspartame is concerned, we are all fed just one version of events tailored to fit the FSA model. From our experience, irrespective of how just your case is and how much evidence you have, if you are prevented from getting a fair hearing to put your case to independent scientific adjudicators. (we favour non food scientists and medical professionals) we are all the losers and what is the point of the Scottish FSA.

The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for Scotland (for the Government), tells us there is no current evidence to support a ban on methanol in our diet - the CMO is perhaps not in possession of all the facts. We have already offered to present our new evidence privately to medical professionals in particular, who are totally unaware that very many of their patients are consuming methanol every day in their diets with potential disastrous long term health implications.

The Scottish people have a right to know this and the Scottish FDA has a duty to inform us having first independently considered all the arguments.

I request this Petition remains open.

Yours Sincerely

James McDonald
(UKAAC)

PE1376/K

RESPONSE DATED 16 AUGUST FROM PROFESSOR MIKE LEAN, UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW – (JMCD Comments in blue and parentheses)

I reviewed the safety and role of aspartame several years ago to write an invited editorial in the British Medical journal. <http://www.bmj.com/content/329/7469/755.full>

(Check out the Rapid responses to the article)

That included wading through hundred and hundreds of bizarre and ill-informed web postings, as well as examining the evaluations of proper research (?).

My conclusion was that aspartame is very safe, and there was no credible evidence that it had ever caused any injury or harm - even in amounts much larger than could be consumed from foods or drinks. (I think we can all see where Prof Lean's sympathies lie)

There were, and still are, countless web-pages given to attacking aspartame, with a vast range of claims that it is toxic. The background to this is obviously some neophobia,(what nonsense) but I suspect that people were very sensitised to the fact that aspartame was developed by Monsanto (This is so wrong it was first discovered and developed by Searle in 1965). , an American company which behaved very badly over its introduction of genetically modified seeds –(? Totally irrelevant,) That is speculation on my part to explain the level of vitriol directed at aspartame. (wrong again some people regard aspartame as a poison) I suspect the company probably did not actively broadcast the fact that the molecule of aspartame contains methanol in its structure,(Neither did you in your BMJ article in 2004) and that will have raised suspicions.(It certainly has)

Jim McDonald has identified the fact that the small molecule of aspartame is made from two natural aminoacids, held together with a molecule of methanol. That is what it looks like on paper, but the methanol is not free,(not yet) it is part of the structure of the bigger molecule. About 10% of the weight of aspartame is the methanol component. When it is digested,(The methanol is not digested it breaks free in the gut at 86degrees f) the (rest of the)molecule is ultimately broken down to end-products of water and carbon dioxide. The process would be expected to include the release, temporarily, of minute amounts of methanol (wrong when freed it takes up to 30 hrs for methanol to clear from the system) but we are talking infinitesimally small amounts, and not enough to be detected in the blood stream.(this is not surprising) There are quite large amounts of methanol in some alcoholic beverages, which we all accept, and in some fruits, which we actively encourage in human diets.(we all know consuming these causes us no harm what so ever - comparing them with the free methanol from aspartame is irrelevant)

It is entirely proper that concerned members of the (Scottish) public should petition government on matters which concern them.(how patronising is that) For any issue around toxicity and food, the Food Standards Agency has an independent Advisory on Toxicity (COT), and it has reported on dietary methanol in 1997 and in 2011. <http://cot.food.gov.uk/pdfs/cotstatementmethanol201102revjuly.pdf>

(Note: the dosing examples illustrated in this report are acute doses which do not in any way compare with the chronic daily accumulation of methanol which occurs through ingestion of the small amounts of methanol from aspartame)

In this report, the example is given that it is necessary to consume 500mg of methanol to detect a rise in the breath (which means it must have reached the blood stream). To achieve that you would need to eat 750 grams of apples or peaches. I could manage that over a couple of hours.(and you would still be very healthy as a result – protected by the natural inhibitors ethanol and pectin) The same amount of methanol could come from 5 grams of aspartame, but that would require consumption of 8 litres of a soft drink sweetened entirely with aspartame at the maximum permitted concentration ((600 mg/litre). I could not manage that. And it doesn't cause any harm at that level - (5 grams of methanol is 7.1mg/kg. 6.2% of the acute dose of methanol which would cause blindness in a 70kg human (114mg/kg) the only safe amount of unnatural methanol in humans is 0.0mg/kg)

The amount of methanol needed to cause any toxic effects is 14.7 grams (??) for a 70 kg man. That would require at least 147 grams of aspartame. At the maximum concentration of 600,mg/litre of aspartame in soft drinks,, that would require consumption of about 200 litres of a soft drink.

(14.7 grams of methanol is 210mg/kg - 114mg/kg of methanol will blind a 70kg human and 343mg/kg could kill him - what is this guy talking about)

I do not think this petition should waste more government time. Mr McDonald should be referred to the FSA Its lay statement is very clear <http://cot.food.gov.uk/pdfs/cotstatementmethanol201102lay.pdf> The COT is entirely independent and trustworthy (I chaired a parallel committee, the FSA Advisory Committee on Research, for 6 years)

(COT is not independent it is a creature of the FSA. It was COT who approved aspartame in 1982 ignoring the severe toxicity of its methanol as Prof. Lean is still doing here, today. Prof. Lean is obviously not up to date - we first introduced FSA to the concept of the danger from methanol poisoning in aspartame in Oct. 2009. – 2 years on they are still not publically recognising the danger)

(The following comments by Professor Lean are not relevant in any way to the question asked.)

I might just add my concern about the mouse experiments conducted in Italy, referred to in the FSA statement, which are reported as showing that aspartame caused some cancers.

(NOTE :)

(The Soffritti (2010) study on mice (cancers) and Halldorson (2010) cohort study on 58,000 women ((pre-births and consumption of artificially sweetened carbonated drinks)) both suggested a possible cause of the cancers and pre-births was methanol. EFSA reviewed both studies this year and concluded that the cancers and pre births were not due to aspartame and they had no reason to alter their current opinion on aspartame or to change its ADI – IE aspartame is still safe?).

The EC has subsequently ordered EFSA to revisit the Soffritti study and to *“undertake a detailed analysis of the study results and conclusions reported by Soffritti et al (2010), including the suggested implication of methanol”*

Also the EC has ordered a new **Urgent full review of the safety of aspartame** including all of its elements (which includes for the first time methanol)

Those experiments fed aspartame in huge dosage, or placebo, to large numbers of mice for their entire lives. When they died (as all mice must) they were very carefully dissected to try to detect any sign of cancer in all the organs (irrespective of why the mouse died). They reported that there were significantly more cancers in certain organs of the mice which had been fed aspartame. But there was no difference in life expectancy, so what they were detecting did not affect survival. And they did not report that some cancers were significantly less in the aspartame -fed mice. This whole experiment was in fact a lesson in how to confuse lay people, and a lot of good scientists, by statistics. If you follow up two very large groups of identical animals for life, it is likely that on average both groups will survive for the same length of time (as happened to these mice) But it is also likely that the exact numbers of animals with different specific cancers will be a bit different between the two groups (that is what happened to these mice). If you look for dozens of different cancers, by pure chance there will be 'significantly' different numbers of specific cancers in the two groups (that is what happened to these mice). The word 'significantly' is a statistical one: A "significant" increase in 1 in 20 cancers will occur purely by chance, with nothing to do with the diet or the aspartame.

I do hope this helps.

Professor Mike Lean