

DPH

Federal Security Building, South

January 23, 1950

Dr. J. R. Robinson
Director of Dental Health
Louisville and Jefferson County Board
of Health
Administrative Offices
240 East Madison Street
Louisville 2, Kentucky

Dear Dr. Robinson:

Referring to your letter of January 17th our experimental fluoridation project at Grand Rapids, Michigan, is the oldest project of this type now being carried on. The results of the last dental examination of the children in Grand Rapids did not supply us with conclusive evidence that the fluoridation of the water supply is effecting a reduction in caries prevalence. The data for the 5 and 6 year olds suggested a downward trend, but the prevalence rates for children aged 9 years and older were virtually the same as in 1945.

In my opinion, the findings to date in Grand Rapids do not in any way indicate that the experiment is less successful than might be expected. As you know, it is anticipated that only those children who use the fluorided water from birth to age 8 years will receive full benefits. On the other hand, our findings for children aged 9 years and older are not in accord with those recorded for Newburgh, New York; Marshall, Texas; or Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

In view of the foregoing, it seems clear that it has not yet been demonstrated that the fluoridation of a water supply effects the same reduction in caries prevalence as obtains in areas where the drinking water naturally contains optimum amounts of fluorides. Since it is our policy to advocate the use of public health procedures which have proved public health benefits, we cannot therefore officially advocate water fluoridation.

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Now to fulfill your request for my personal views on this subject. First, I do not consider that any of the communities which have undertaken the fluoridation of their water supplies were unjustified in doing so. In each case the community officials responsible for the fluoridation made the decision after thorough examination of the available evidence. I think the presumptive evidence on the value of fluoridated waters is excellent. In fact, there is not one whit of evidence, either epidemiological or laboratory evidence resulting from studies on animals, which provides us with a basis for thinking that it will not work. Thus it seems to me that the problem of determining whether a community should await the outcome of the present studies or should go ahead on the basis of presumptive evidence is entirely a local one. On the other hand, I believe that we shall have conclusive evidence from the Grand Rapids project within the next year or to at the most. I know the time of anticipated results is important in considering the fluoridation of a water supply of a large city such as Louisville, since in your case a large expenditure of funds for both equipment and sodium fluoride would be necessary.

I hope that I have covered the items presented for my consideration in your letter and that my answers will be helpful to you.

Sincerely yours,

John W. Knutson, Dental Director
Chief, Division of Dental Public Health

JWK:wc

NEW HILLS SANATORIUM
NEW HILLS, KENTUCKY
TREATMENT CENTER
151 MADISON STREET (2)
HEALTH CENTERS
EAST LOUISVILLE
151 JEFFERSON STREET (2)
CENTRAL LOUISVILLE
1122 CEDAR COURT (5)
PORTLAND
PORTLAND AVENUE (12)

Louisville and Jefferson County Board of Health

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
240 EAST MADISON STREET
LOUISVILLE 2, KENTUCKY

January 17, 1950

LOUISVILLE GENERAL HOSPITAL
329 EAST CHESTNUT STREET
OUTLYING CLINIC
WAVERLY HILLS (TUBERC.)
235 EAST CHESTNUT STREET
HIGHLAND PARK
4521 CRITTENDEN DRIVE
FINCASTLE
3016 FINCASTLE ROAD
PREVENTIVE
240 EAST MADISON STREET

DPH

John W. Knutson, Dental Director
Chief, Division of Dental Public Health
Federal Security Building, South
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Dr. Knutson:

Again, at the request of Dr. C. Howe Eller, I am writing to you for further information and/or opinions personal or otherwise, regarding fluorination of the communal water supplies.

Is there any reason on your part to believe that the results as published to date of the Newburgh-Kingston fluorination project are correct and that on the basis of this, is it possible to recommend a like project in other communities desiring the benefits as stated in published results? Also, I would like your personal comment on the results of the Marshall, Texas; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Evanston, Illinois and various Wisconsin programs of fluorination.

We realize that until these projects are considered complete, that is, a possible 10 to 14 year cycle, United States Public Health Service is not in position to advocate the fluorination of the communal waters. In other words, we are desirous of knowing whether or not you personally feel that we would be justified in attempting fluorination in Louisville, Kentucky.

I realize this is a large and difficult request, but it would be personally beneficial to me and Dr. Eller and to the Committee appointed to this study to receive this information. Truthfully, I need this information by February 1st, if possible.

Thanking you for your kind help, I remain,

Fraternaly yours,

J. R. Robinson
J. R. ROBINSON, D.D.S.
Director of Dental Health

JRR:EB