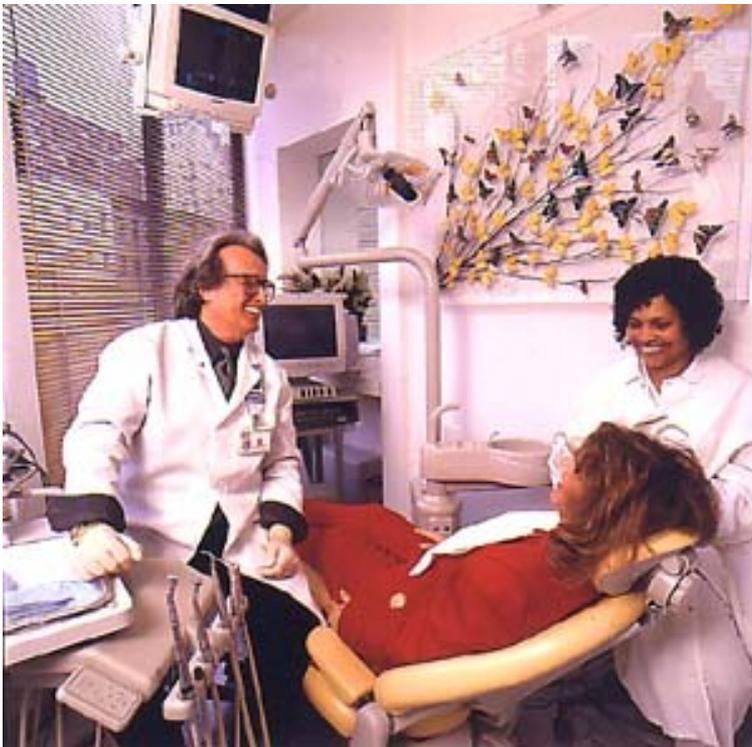


# Neurotoxic Effects of Mercury in Dental Nurses



Michael Bender, Director  
Mercury Policy Project/  
Tides Center

[www.mercurypolicy.org](http://www.mercurypolicy.org)

F.D.A. Public Hearing

Gaithersburg, MD

September 7, 2006

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# Presentation Overview

- 2005 Norwegian Broadcasting documentary examines complaints by dental nurses
- Reports of high mercury exposure shocking
- Response by dental nurses to airing of documentary: **Offspring affected too!**
- Common sense recommendations:
  - 5) Ban amalgam placement during pregnancy
  - 6) Nurses placed on leave during pregnancy

# 2005 Norwegian Broadcasting Documentary on “Mercury girls”

Investigation into dental nurses complaints:

- Tremors, memory and concentration problems, liver and kidney problems
- depressions, extreme fatigue, anxiety, mood swings
- vision disturbances, diarrhea and menstrual and muscular problems

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# Study Results

- Study of neurological differences between dental nurses and control group
- **Results surprised scientists:** 25% of dental nurses reported having neurological problems.
- Tremors: 36% vs 8% (nurses vs control); Memory: 14% vs 0%; Depressions: 18% v 4%; Heart and Lung Problems: 21% vs 5%.
- Pilot project oversight by Professor Bente Moen, Head of Section for Occupation Medicine at the University of Bergen in Norway

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# Experiment Conducted in Response to “Expert” Claims “No Effect” at that Hg Level

- Professor Nils Gjerdet at the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Bergen conducted experiment
- Following the procedure used in the past in dental office, heated amalgam (under hood) then measured vapors
- **Results were staggering**
- Every time amalgam was prepared the meter read 1000 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, the maximum limit device measures

# New Zealand Nurses Were Exposed to Similar Levels of Mercury

- In 1974, authorities discovered nurses ill with mercury poisoning; given paid leave until levels “normalized”
- Nurses contacted authorities in 1990’s with concerns about their health and that of their children
- Statistically significant study found 25 % of the dental nurses had had a hysterectomy compared to 6 % in the control group.
- New Zealand authorities have funded Dr. Linda Jones et al to expand study

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# Response After Documentary Airing

- 394 women called Norwegian television station
- Pattern emerged: Many worked while pregnant and were also breast feeding
- **High number reported children born with birth defects, learning difficulties, immunological, muscular/skeletal problems**
- Mothers had severe bleedings and multiple late abortions



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# Response to Documentary in Denmark

- **More than 1650 dental nurses have called the Danish Trade Union**
- Concerns expressed for both their health and the health of their children
- In response, Danish Trade Union launched a new website: [www.kviksoelv.dk](http://www.kviksoelv.dk)
- Danes working collaboratively with Parat, Norwegian Trade Union: [www.parat.com](http://www.parat.com)

# Norwegian, Danish\* Governments Now Studying Dental Mercury Exposure Effects

- **A thorough literature search** to create an overall survey of knowledge both nationally & internationally
- **An epidemiological study** to examine illnesses among dental groups/others with Hg exposures
- **A clinical study** to find symptoms, illnesses that may exist among a statistically randomly selected group
- **A focused program of medical examinations** so that each person's symptoms and illnesses can be compared to their mercury exposure

\* English translation of a 16 February 2006 press release on the website of the Danish Employment Ministry at:

<http://www.bm.dk/sw5110.asp>.

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# Norway Now Actively Discourages Dentists from Placing Amalgam

- Amalgam placement takes away from the life of the tooth
- Levels of mercury in pregnant women and children too high
- Follow precautionary principle
- Principle of product substitution: when available, use less toxic materials
- **Amalgam placement banned during pregnancy**



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# Background: Literature Review Conducted

- Located study of 6000 dentists and dental nurses by Dr. Diane Echeverria at Battelle Center for Public Health and Research and Evaluation in Seattle, WA
- Found that, **in US dental offices today**, exposure to low levels of mercury below the WHO standard of 20 mg/m<sup>3</sup> **resulted in neurological damage detectable in neuropsychological tests**

# Common Sense Recommendations



- Developing fetus most susceptible to mercury
- As a precaution, FDA should ban mercury tooth filling placement during pregnancies
- Dental nurses should be placed on paid leave during, before pregnancy
- FDA should provide 800 number **to report Hg exposure problems dental nurses and their children are experiencing**

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# Norwegian Press Award for Outstanding Investigative Journalism

- Presented to Ms. Synnøve Bakke and Ms. Kjersti Knudssøn, Norwegian Broadcasting, who won this most prestigious Norwegian journalistic prize for their documentaries on dental mercury exposure
- The judges' statement: **“After the two journalists’ impressive and extensive work, our perceptions of what 10,000 dental nurses were exposed to in their workplace has been changed forever.”**

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# Award Given to Dental Assistant by the Norwegian Society for Civilian Courage

- Previously a dental assistant for 23 years, Ms. Tordis Klausen was recognized: ***“For her tireless work to acquire and spread information about health damage resulting from exposure to dental amalgam and mercury in dental clinics.”***
- Ms. Klausen lost a civil lawsuit in 1997 and 1999 for compensation; then appealed all the way up to the Norwegian Supreme Court — and was then denied
- Ms. Klausen has since appealed to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg

# **2006 Zola-Prize Winner Tordis Klausen**

Awarded to persons who ***“Openly and courageously have revealed or opposed conditions in Norway that threaten basic values in Norwegian society: human rights, democracy and legal protection.”***



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# Acknowledgements

- Many thanks to the following:
- Ms. Tordis Stigen Klausen
- Ms. Maryanne Rygg
- Ms. Synnøve Bakke, Norwegian Broadcasting
- Ms. Kjersti Knudssøn, Director of the *Mercury Girls* and *Mercury Children* documentaries



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# Information on Documentaries

- Information about the Norwegian Broadcasting documentaries can be found at:
- *Mercury Girls*:  
<http://www.tv2world.com/programmes/show/109>
- *Mercury Children*:  
<http://www.tv2world.com/programmes/show/110>
- Anyone interested in airing the documentaries should contact TV2 WORLD DENMARK, [www.tv2world.com](http://www.tv2world.com) Their email addresses is as follows [sales@tv2.dk](mailto:sales@tv2.dk) and tel +45 65 21 22 23

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