

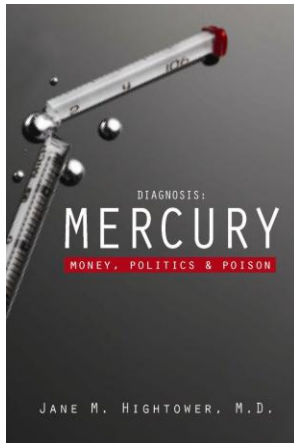


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CONTACT Severn Williams, 510-336-9566
Jaime Jennings, 202-232-7933x44

EMAIL sev@sevwilliams.com
jjennings@islandpress.org

WEBSITE www.diagnosismercury.org



NEW EVIDENCE HIGHLIGHTS DANGERS OF MERCURY TOXICITY IN FISH

NEW BOOK BY RENOWNED PHYSICIAN SHOWS GOVERNMENT
REGULATIONS INSUFFICIENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AT RISK

San Francisco, Calif. (October 7, 2008) - Dr. Jane Hightower - widely acknowledged as the first US physician to recognize low-level mercury poisoning in patients who regularly consume certain types of fish - today released new evidence showing that the FDA has failed to inform and protect the public from the risks of mercury poisoning due to consumption of certain types of seafood. Dr. Hightower unveiled the key points of her research in a teleconference with the media on October 7, 2008. She has also released a new book, [*Diagnosis: Mercury: Money, Politics, and Poison*](#), which is widely available in stores starting today.

“Common sense says that if you are not feeling well, and are eating poison, then stop eating it and see if you feel better,” said Dr. Hightower. “The problem is that we are not given enough information about just how much mercury is in the fish that is widely available in stores and restaurants. Most American consumers are simply unaware that the fish they eat could be making them sick.”

Using newly available legal testimony and investigative research into the source of the scientific data that inform the FDA’s mercury consumption guidelines, Dr. Hightower has pulled together information that should concern everyone in the United States.

The FDA’s current mercury consumption guidelines are rooted in a study of the victims of a mass methylmercury poisoning in Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. While researchers from the University of Rochester and the World Health Organization wrote articles about the effects of mercury on these victims, Dr. Hightower shows that their conclusions were based on data provided by one of Hussein’s government allies. And this associate in Iraq’s health ministry—who oversaw the study of Iraqi victims of mercury toxicity—has recently revealed that he withheld information from researchers, information that might have shown severe effects at much lower levels of exposure.

When the FDA and the swordfishing giant Anderson Seafood Inc. went to court in the mid-1970s over the FDA’s consumption guidelines, Anderson used the Iraqi study as proof that high levels of mercury exposure are safe for the general public. The company won its case based

on the evidence presented in court. But in the course of Dr. Hightower’s research she discovered that one of the lead investigators of the Iraqi poisoning disputed the fishing industry’s claim of how much mercury is safe to eat. Even as government agencies around the world - including our own EPA - have moved away from the “safe” levels based on the Iraq studies, the FDA has failed to adequately warn the public that mercury-laden seafood is a major threat to their health. The concern reaches far beyond women of childbearing age and children.

“[*Diagnosis: Mercury*](#) brings together the strongest evidence to date that the FDA’s guidelines for fish consumption are insufficient,” said Chuck Savitt, president of Island Press, which published the book. “We simply don’t know how widespread low-level mercury toxicity is in the United States, and this book tells us that regular consumers of certain types of fish are in danger.”

Hightower’s research spans from individual patients in her practice to widespread mercury poisonings in Japan, Canada, and Iraq. [*Diagnosis: Mercury*](#) makes a powerful case for increased study and stronger FDA regulation of this poison in our food supply.

Materials that complement the book’s findings are available at diagnosismercury.org, including a summary of the many ways mercury toxicity expresses itself in patients and a list of which types of fish typically contain the highest and the lowest levels of mercury as well as a chart that illustrates the many competing mercury consumption guidelines from the EPA, the FDA, and others.

Jane M. Hightower, M.D., is a board certified internal medicine physician in San Francisco, California. She published a landmark study that brought the issue of mercury in seafood to national attention. She continues to publish scientific papers and give lectures on the subject.

Diagnosis: Mercury
by Jane M. Hightower
An Island Press Hardcover
Publication Date: October 2008
ISBN: 978-1-59726-395-5/ Pages: 316/ Price: \$24.95
Available at www.islandpress.org or www.diagnosismercury.org

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