

IN MEMORIAM



John A Yiamouyiannis, PhD
September 25, 1942 - October 8, 2000

The essence of science is to investigate and understand the world around us – to explore and interpret verifiable reality. Good scientists know this and are willing to challenge and correct what they believe to be wrong in mainstream science, especially in their fields of expertise. In doing so they frequently encounter intimidation and retaliation from opposing forces in power who are bent on imposing their views by preventing valid contradictory and potentially embarrassing evidence from gaining support. In recent years, even such distinguished scientists as two-time Nobel laureate Linus Pauling and National Academy of Sciences molecular biologist Peter Duesberg have suffered this fate for daring to question the entrenched gatekeepers of biomedical orthodoxy.

Closer to home, in the field of fluoride research, such reprisals are legion and have been experienced by many in our ranks, including: the late Dean Burk, who while chief chemist at the US National Cancer Institute was harassed for defending controversial alternative cancer remedies; William Marcus, who was dismissed from and later restored to his high-level scientific position in the US Environmental Protection Agency for objecting to unwarranted changes in fluoride-cancer data; Phyllis Mullenix, who was permanently discharged from her position as head of toxicology at the Forsyth Dental Research Center when she published her findings showing serious neurological toxic

effects from fluoride in rats; John Colquhoun, our late editor, who, because of his own extensive research, became publicly opposed to continuing water fluoridation and was then forced to take early retirement from his position as principal dental officer of Auckland, NZ; and, of course, Dr George Waldbott, founder of our society, a leading Michigan allergist, who was marginalized in medical circles after he had published his clinical findings showing serious adverse health effects from fluoridation.

Similarly, for many years, John Yiamouyiannis, whose unyielding opposition to fluoridation was based on his painstaking independent study and research, was a constant thorn in the side of those who promote fluoridation but were unwilling to face him in open debate, except in court, where they had no other choice. In 1995 their incessant assaults reached a fever pitch with a scurrilous attack in the *British Dental Journal* on his activities as a conscientious citizen and his credibility as a dedicated scientist.¹ Five years later, after refusing to print a meticulously-documented reply from him,² the editors of the *BDJ* belatedly published a mealy-mouthed apology conceding "there can be no question mark over Dr Yiamouyiannis' honesty, integrity and good faith..."³

I first met Dr Y, as he was often called, at a public health committee hearing of the Ohio State Legislature in Columbus around 1970. He gave a short but impressive presentation on why fluoridation is risky to health and should not be made mandatory. Some years earlier, in 1963, he had received his BS in biochemistry from the University of Chicago and in 1967 his PhD in that subject from the University of Rhode Island. After completing postdoctoral research at Western Reserve University Medical School, he became a biochemical editor at Chemical Abstracts Service in Columbus, Ohio.

At CAS Dr Y became increasingly aware of scientific studies demonstrating adverse effects of fluoride on health and began to express his concerns publicly. Threatened with loss of substantial federal funding by a liaison officer of the US Public Health Service if he persisted in such activity, CAS ordered him to stop his public opposition to fluoridation and made his continued employment practically unbearable. In 1972 he left CAS and later became science director of the California-based National Health Federation. In this capacity, in collaboration with Dean Burk, he undertook the largest study ever conducted on fluoridation and cancer death rates in the United States, which was published in *Fluoride* in July 1977.⁴

This research led to Dr Y's extensive and lengthy involvement in various court proceedings to end fluoridation, by which time he had left the National Health Federation and became executive director of Health Action and later head of the new Safe Water Foundation. From October 1973 to October 1981 he was a co-editor of our journal.

In 1983, his well-known and widely-circulated book, *Fluoride, The Aging Factor*, was published (3rd edition 1993).⁵ In 1986 his monograph on *High Performance Health* appeared,⁶ and in 1993 he coauthored a book entitled *AIDS* with Peter Duesberg.⁷ During the past decade he was sole author of two

additional major papers in *Fluoride*: “Water Fluoridation and Tooth Decay” (April 1990)⁸ and “Fluoridation and Cancer” (April 1993).⁹

Early in 1999 Dr Y confided to me that he might have a serious health problem. For some time, however, he delayed getting a definitive diagnosis of what proved to be colon cancer, to which he ultimately succumbed on Sunday, October 8th of this year. He is survived by his wife Dale; six children with his first wife Natalie – Carmen, Zeus, Athena, Lurleen, Portia and Apollo; six grandchildren – Andrea, Diana, Natalie, Samantha, Travis and Azure; and two sisters – Piney and Sophie.

For myself and many others, the premature death of John Yiamouyiannis was a deep personal bereavement, and his passing is certainly a major loss for fluoride research. He will be greatly missed, perhaps most of all because of his intense concern about the harm caused by fluoride added to our drinking water under the guise of science. His life mirrored the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson: “He serves all who dares be true.”

Albert W Burgstahler

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