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timely information from the ADA*

Dental Amalgam Media Coverage Continues

Food and Drug Administration hearings on dental amalgam that were reported in a Sept. 6 *eGram* continue to generate heavy press coverage. Coverage has been driven by a panel of outside advisers' rejection of FDA's draft report concluding that there is no new scientific evidence to justify regulation of dental amalgam. The report was based on a review of 34 recent studies and found "no significant new information," but the advisory panel said more research is needed. The panel didn't find amalgam unsafe but in a 13-7 vote said the FDA report didn't objectively and clearly present current research. In a second 13-7 vote, panelists said the report's conclusions about safety weren't "reasonable," given currently available research. The advisory panel was concerned about gaps in available science on amalgam safety, among them the lack of studies on the effect of maternal amalgams on the fetus. The panel consisted of the FDA dental products panel and a neurological advisory panel on dental amalgam and mercury toxicity. The votes don't mean or suggest that the panel believes amalgam is unsafe, nor do they suggest that amalgam will be banned or otherwise restricted. The panel of advisers did recommend, however, that the report be rewritten, and that could will fuel efforts to restrict or ban amalgam use. Three ADA spokespersons testified at the hearing.

The ADA issued a [news release](#) immediately after the hearing welcoming further study on amalgam safety, while reiterating that "the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence supports the safety and efficacy of dental amalgam" and that it should remain available for dentists and patients. Although questions were raised at the hearing about the safety of amalgam for pregnant women and children, current scientific evidence indicates that amalgam is safe and effective for any demographic or age group.

Media coverage has been extensive and included ADA Consumer Advisor Dr. Ada Cooper appearing on NBC Nightly News to reaffirm the ADA's position. See [MSNBC online](#) for an AP story and the NBC Nightly News segment. Reuters, Bloomberg, CBS radio and other outlets also picked up the story. ABC's [Good Morning America](#) ran a story this Wednesday morning in which ADA Consumer Advisor Dr. Ed Hewlitt was quoted. But much more time was spent on a live interview between Diane Sawyer and a dentist who doesn't place amalgams. The *Wall Street Journal* also ran a story Tuesday that was posted by the [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#). The article said, "The [FDA] panel vote doesn't mean the fillings aren't

safe; it just means the experts felt that far more study is needed.” The article also did a good job comparing amalgam to other filling materials and stated, “Unless you are having a problem with a tooth or a rare allergic reaction..., most experts say it’s not necessary to remove the fillings.” On the other hand, the *Chicago Tribune* this week called the advisory panel’s action a “slap in the face” to the (ADA).

If your patients ask about the safety of dental amalgam, point out the following:

- Dentists welcome this review of the science by the FDA.
- The overwhelming weight of scientific evidence, including two recent clinical trials published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, support the safety and effectiveness of dental amalgam.
- Dental amalgam contains elemental mercury combined with other metals such as silver, copper, tin and zinc, which forms a safe, stable cavity-filling material. It’s important to note that dental amalgam has entirely different properties than mercury by itself.
- Amalgam is one of several safe, effective materials to fill cavities. Other materials include gold and tooth-colored fillings.

You can also print out and share the following information with your patients:

- Dental Filling Options: [information for patients](#)
- An ADA [press statement](#) on the dental amalgam clinical trials published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.
- A *Journal of the American Dental Association* patient page entitled, [When A Filling Needs to be Replaced](#).

For further information about dental restoratives, contact the ADA Division of Science at 800-621-8099, x2878 or science@ada.org.

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