CORRESPONDENCE

Letter to the Editor: Conceptual and Analytic Issues Surrounding a Report on Domestic Salt Fluoridation in Mexico

A recent report by Hernandez-Guerrero et al. (*Fluoride content in table salt distributed in Mexico City, Mexico*, J Public Health Dent 2008;68(4):242-245) elicits multiple questions. Clarification would aid our understanding of the methods and rationale of the manuscript, and further explain this research to JPHD readership.

Does the sampling of 44 brands of salt constitute the universe of domestic salt available in Mexico City?

What methodology was used to analyze fluoride content? There are published reports in which methods to analyze fluoridated salt have been assessed; they seem to agree that fluoride determination is affected by the method used to conduct the analysis.

The authors mention that salt manufacturers have inadequate procedures to measure the fluoride concentration in their products. In what way does the manufacturers' methodology differ from the authors' methodology?

Was the variation among the three laboratories that conducted analyses assessed? If so, it should be summarized.

What is the rationale for assessing the possible correlation between earth and marine salts?

What are the units in column two of Table 1? The lack of units prevents readers from further evaluation of the study results or comparison to Mexican guidelines. The authors state *"The labels (. . .) indicated a higher content (than what is in agreement with the Mexican norms).* According to their table, this higher content was 610-915 (no units provided). If the labels indicate fluoride content as potassium fluoride or sodium fluoride, they could potentially be in compliance with Mexican norms. These guidelines indicate that minimal levels must be 200 mg of fluoride ion (F)/kg of salt, which could be in the form of potassium fluoride (612 mg KF/kg) or sodium fluoride (442 mg NaF/kg).

The authors state ". . . *the unregulated introduction of fluoridated salt . . . might aggravate (fluorosis)."* To what extent is the distribution of fluoridated salt actually "unregulated" in either Mexico or Mexico City?

The authors state ". . . *Consumers in Mexico are unable to make educated purchasing decision with respect to fluoride content in table salt . . . ."* This statement may misrepresent the rationale of the fluoridation program. Hernandez-Guerrero et al. may have confused European policies (where consumers are offered domestic salt with or without fluoride) with the Mexican program never intended to provide consumer choice. Clarification or comment is requested.

Finally, the authors mention that ". . . *no studies on fluoride concentration in table salt sold in the Mexican market are available to date*". There are in fact various publications that have reported salt fluoride concentration in the Mexican market since 1995. By not referencing these previous publications, the authors have missed the opportunity to compare their results and discuss possible changes in reported salt fluoride concentrations over time.

Sincerely

Armando E. Soto-Rojas, DDS, MPH
E. Angeles Martinez-Mier, DDS, MSD, PhD
Gerardo Maupome, BDS, MSc, PhD
Indiana University School of Dentistry, Indianapolis, US

DOI: 10.1111/j.1752-7325.2009.00134.x