

Chile Stops Use of Mercury in Vaccines

Decision Comes as WHO Meets to Discuss Global Treaty on Mercury Use

WASHINGTON, April 3, 2012 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ — Chile has become the first developing country to stop the use of mercury in vaccines.

In meetings with the Coalition for Mercury-Free Drugs (CoMeD) held last week in Santiago, Chile, the current Vice President of the Chilean Senate, Alejandro Navarro Brain, committed to adopting legislation in the Senate that would prohibit the mercury-based preservative Thimerosal from vaccines.

Thimerosal, which is 49% mercury by weight, continues to be used as a preservative in vaccines and other drugs worldwide, despite the fact that it is a human neurotoxin and that safer, less toxic alternatives are readily available.

Chile's decision comes as the World Health Organization (WHO) meets today in Geneva, Switzerland, to discuss a global, legally binding treaty on mercury use. That meeting will examine alternative vaccine preservatives, as well as the economic, programmatic, and manufacturing implications of moving to single-dose, preservative-free vaccines.

While applauding the WHO for giving the issue of mercury use in vaccines the urgent attention it merits, CoMeD expressed serious reservations about WHO's decision to meet in closed-door session.

Noting that past closed-door sessions have led to "repeated and, we believe, untrue declarations that there is no evidence of harm from the use of Thimerosal in vaccines," the Reverend Lisa K. Sykes, President of CoMeD, states, "Such unfounded assertions have led to the establishment of two standards of vaccine safety, one which is predominately mercury-free for developed, western countries and one that is mercury-preserved for developing countries."

As a result, Rev. Sykes continues, "The most vulnerable among us continue to be intentionally exposed to mercury from Thimerosal in childhood vaccines. This exposure is entirely avoidable, and must be stopped."

Dr. Mark R. Geier, a CoMeD Director, agrees, adding, "Recent statements by those holding national and global responsibility for vaccine safety are difficult to reconcile with the known and published toxicity of Thimerosal."

According to CoMeD, numerous scientific studies and extensive peer-reviewed scientific and medical papers have all concluded that Thimerosal poses a significant health risk. Thimerosal manufacturers also acknowledge that the preservative can cause mild to severe mental retardation in children.

For additional information about CoMeD and its work to ban mercury from drugs, including vaccines, worldwide, visit www.mercury-freedrugs.org.