

KINGFISHmke.com: Freshwater for Life Action Coalition (FLAC) issues statement supporting Alderman Zielinski's Lead Awareness Resolution

Posted on Wednesday, Jul 19, 2017

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

The resolution introduced by Alderman Zielinski says in part that "...The Health Department shall also issue written recommendations to Milwaukee-area obstetricians, pediatricians and public and private healthcare facilities and partner agencies that women of childbearing age and children under the age of six should not drink unfiltered water and that children under the age of six should be tested for lead."

This portion of the resolution is very important because most medical experts agree that there is no safe level of lead in the body and that lead is especially dangerous for young children because their brains are still developing.

There are numerous studies available that have linked childhood lead poisoning to serious health problems such hypertension, impaired cognition, poor academic performance, and behavioral problems that develop as children become adults. Relatively every medical professional agrees that preventing lead poisoning can be accomplished by removing lead hazards from places where children live, learn and play.

Yet the seriousness of lead in water is not fully understood by Milwaukee medical professionals. Case in point is an article published by WUWM on September 15, 2016 entitled "Milwaukee Residents Worried about Lead in Drinking Water Rush to Buy Filters."

The article interviews Dr. Mark Kostic who works for the Wisconsin Poison Center and Children's Hospital. In the article Dr. Kostic says "any lead is too much lead,"

because it can impact development and behavior. Yet he says he wants to keep the risk related to water in perspective.”

Dr. Kostic goes on to say in the article that “Someone would have to drink numerous glasses of water in order to absorb as much lead as they’d get from eating a single paint chip.”

Kostic says “it’s a question of dose.” The article goes on to say that Dr. Kostic points out that “someone would have to drink numerous glasses of water in order to absorb as much lead as they’d get from eating a single paint chip.”

The comments made by Dr. Kostic go against the peer reviewed studies of world renowned lead water expert Dr. Marc Edwards and a 2006 study published by the Urban and Housing Development.

In 2006, the United States Housing and Urban Development (HUD) revised a study it released in 2003 entitled: “Study of HUD’s Risk Assessment Methodology in Three U.S. Communities” by the National Center for Healthy Housing.

The study focused on lead in blood of children. Buried in the appendix section of the study is this paragraph: “The model results found that for children in this study, drinking one 8-ounce glass of water per day corresponded to a 45 percent probability of having an elevated blood lead level, while drinking two 8-ounce glasses of water per day corresponded to a 50 percent probability of having an elevated blood lead level.”

Notice this passage of the study goes entirely against what Dr. Kostic is quoted as saying in the WUWM article.

To be completely transparent, the 2006 HUD report pointed out that, “Earlier investigation of the relationships between the intake of tap water and the blood lead status of a child found that in Milwaukee and New York City, the total amount of tap water or tap water-based drinks that were consumed per day by the child was significantly related to the child’s blood lead status. However, the water lead level itself was not significantly related to the child’s blood lead status.”

In addition, the conclusion of the appendix section of the report revealed that, “It was hypothesized that the effect of amount of water consumed per day on blood lead outcomes was modified by the water lead concentration and/or the time the water is allowed to run before use.

The analysis presented here does not support this hypothesis. The findings do not provide any further understanding why consumption of water is related to blood lead outcomes.”

However, in an email addressing this point Dr. Edwards elaborated on this matter

and pointed out that based on his experiences and research over the years many health departments across the country testing for “lead in water measurements miss lead” because testing is not done adequately.

Dr. Edwards went on to say that “the way the health department takes samples, does not detect chunks of lead falling into the water, LSL (lead service lines) lead and many other lead in water dangers.”

He further states that in his “...experiences in homes of children with elevated blood lead, where the health department found little or no lead”, he “found lead in water hazards by taking more samples, sampling the bathroom, sampling the LSL, etc...” This Dr. Edwards goes on to say “...would explain why kids drinking more water have more EBL (elevated blood lead), even when lead in water is low. The lead in water is actually high.”

Taking into the statement made by Dr. Mark Kostic and the position held by the Milwaukee Health Department should give rise to concern to our entire community that when it comes to lead in water, taking precaution as being suggested by this resolution is fundamentally a wise thing to do.

The experts disagree with our local officials as to the seriousness lead in water presents to the health of our most vulnerable. It’s not a matter of dosage as Dr. Kostic believes and it’s should not be treated in a nonchalant manner by our health department.

The health department should be regulated to do what it should have been doing years ago. Informing our community health professionals of new research in lead in water and issuing advisories to water consumers regarding lead spiking potentially going on in neighborhood with street construction and testing babies before they reach the age of one years old for lead blood levels.

Dr. Edwards concluded by stressing that “filters work to remove lead.” This is true. However, removing these lead service laterals from our water distribution is long overdue.

The City of Milwaukee must take this matter of lead in water more seriously and stop relying on antiquated Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lead in water standards that are proving to be more of a detriment to the lives of our children. Alerting the citizens to take precautionary measures against lead in water poisoning is a sound and practical thing to do. The members of the Public Safety and Health Committee as well as the Common Council should support the resolution introduced by Alderman Zielinski.