

2014

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Recommended Citation

Fox, Leah, "Promoting Public Water Fluoridation in Bennington VT" (2014). *Family Medicine Clerkship Student Projects*. 39.
<https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/fmclerk/39>

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PROMOTING PUBLIC WATER FLUORIDATION IN BENNINGTON VT

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October 2014
Family
Medicine R5
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THE STATE OF ORAL HEALTH IN BENNINGTON

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recognized community water fluoridation as one of the ten greatest public health achievements of the 20th century.
- It reduces tooth decay over a person's lifetime by 25%.
- Over the past 40 years, there have been **6 failed attempts to fluoridate the drinking water in the town of Bennington.**
- There is an overabundance of tooth decay affecting citizens of Bennington.
- The need for dental care in Bennington far outweighs the resources available.

- **The average lifetime cost per person to fluoridate community water is less than the cost of one dental filling.**
- **Every \$1.00 invested in water fluoridation saves \$38.00 in dental costs**
- **The cost of providing fluoridated water is a little over one dollar per person, per year.**

COST OF DENTAL HEALTH

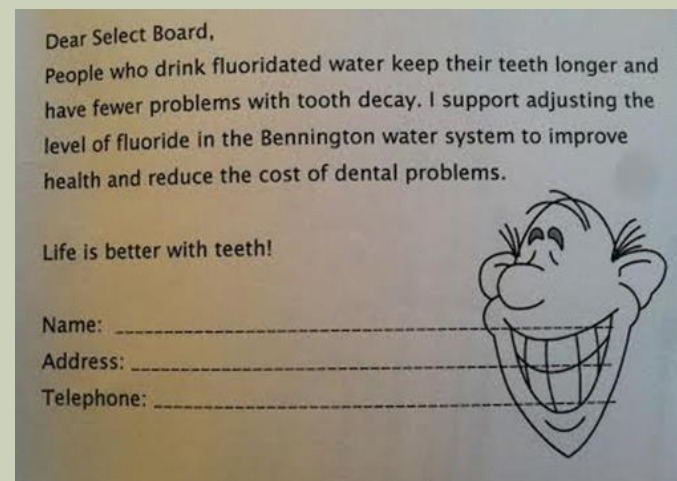
Water fluoridation saves money. As an inexpensive intervention, it helps prevent tooth decay, and therefore the need for unnecessary dental work.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

- Due to the overwhelming need for dental care in Bennington, 8 local community members formed the Bennington Oral Health Coalition (BOHC). This group decided to make public water fluoridation their top priority.
- [Name Withheld] MD, a retired physician who works at the Bennington Free Clinic and is also an active member in BOHC, describes a strong anti-fluoride movement in the community. This vocal minority use pseudoscience and fear to dissuade voters from passing a movement to fluoridate the water supply.
- The BOHC's main goal is to educate the Bennington community on the safety and effectiveness of water fluoridation. During their biweekly meetings, members brainstorm ideas to reach the public and effective ways to educate the community.

INTERVENTION AND METHODOLOGY

- Distribution of educational materials to primary care and dental offices in Bennington (family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, OB/GYN and dentists). This includes facts about fluoridation, talking points for providers to address the issue with patients, and flyers to hang in the office.
- Script for office receptionists to ask patients to read a handout about fluoridation and encourage them to send a postcard to the Select Board, and sign a petition of support.
- Design of a waiting room poster to be displayed in offices. This will serve to encourage patients to start thinking their oral health, and to promote the providers' support of fluoridation.





Brookside Pediatrics Supports Community Water Fluoridation

Find out how you can **PROTECT YOUR CHILD'S SMILE** by speaking to our staff today

Life is Better
with Teeth



The Bennington Oral Health Coalition



RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS

These posters were hung in the waiting rooms of local primary care practices, encouraging patients to get educated on water fluoridation.



LIFE IS BETTER WITH TEETH

WE NEED TO FLOURIDATE BENNINGTON'S WATER SUPPLY

IT'S THE SINGLE MOST EFFECTIVE PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURE TO PREVENT TOOTH DECAY.

FLOURIDATION IS SIMPLY THE ADJUSTMENT OF FLUORIDE THAT IS NATURALLY IN OUR WATER TO LEVELS THAT WILL PREVENT TOOTH DECAY.

SCIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT IT IS SAFE. IT DOES NOT CAUSE BONE CANCER OR ANY OTHER OF THE WILD CLAIMS THAT CRITICS HAVE MADE.

OVER 200 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE U.S. HAVE FLUORIDATED WATER SYSTEMS AND BENEFIT FROM IT.

WHY NOT BENNINGTON?

A SIMPLE PATIENT HANDOUT TO BE GIVEN WITH EACH VISIT SUMMARY. INTENDED TO GET PEOPLE THINKING ABOUT PUBLIC FLUORIDATION

Patient Education

RESULTS, RESPONSE

- The reception of primary care offices was very positive
- Concern was expressed about past failed attempts, but optimistic about the tactics that the BOHC is taking to tackle the issue
- Practitioners were grateful that the BOHC considered their limited time to devote to the issue. Measures were taking to ensure that the burden did not fall on providers, and the main goal would be to have information assessable and office staff prepared to answer questions.
- Participating offices are ready to begin their educational efforts by December 1st.

MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS

Effectiveness

- Raises awareness of the issue, and prompts patients to ask questions during their visit
- Clear language makes the message assessable to many different people
- The petition and postcards gather support directly from community members

Limitations

- Office staff have another step to add in their process of seeing patients
- Patients need to be literate to read the educational materials
- The intervention is only reaching community members who are actively receiving healthcare

■ Social Media

- The use of local newspaper, The Bennington Banner, the public access TV station, Cat-TV, and radio station, WBTV, would help spread the word about the safety and effectiveness of water fluoridation
- Facebook, Twitter, and other online communities are another great way to spread information in today's world, especially among younger people. BOHC would strongly benefit from a Facebook page that can continually keep people updated on their goals and accomplishments.

■ Speaker's Bureau

- The BOHC would benefit from having a group of speakers who are willing to approach community groups (such as the school nurses or local Lions Club), and give short talks on the benefits of water fluoridation. This would help reduce the volume of the anti-fluoridation voice, which has overpowered open informational forums in the past.

FUTURE PROJECTS

Next steps for
BOHC and the
push to
fluoridate
public water in
Bennington

REFERENCES

- The American Dental Association, <http://www.ada.org/en/>
- The Campaign for Dental Health, <http://www.ilikemyteeth.org/>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/>
- Vermont Department of Health, <http://healthvermont.gov/>