



SAFEMINDS STATEMENT

First session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Mercury

The Problem

In assessing environmental and human exposure to all forms of mercury, a wider view is needed. Vaccine products for humans and animals manufactured using mercury create environmental and health problems:

- during production for workers handling and inhaling mercury;
- during use if spilled or broken;
- during disposal of mercury waste from production entering municipal waterways, contaminated packaging, and unused product, and
- during excretion from both humans and animals.

To reduce the release of and exposure to mercury, the drive for safer vaccine sterilization practices intensified in the U.S. in 1999. This action was successful in decreasing the production, placement, and sale of several mercury-preserved vaccine products in developed countries. However since that time, use of mercury-preserved vaccines has grown in developing nations, and mercury-preserved influenza vaccines have become widely distributed globally. There is reason on grounds of safety to change current mercury-preserved vaccine manufacturing practices. The risks are clear. Understanding the toxicity of mercury, specifically the type used in vaccine manufacture and preservation, begins with the Material Safety Data Sheet.

The Solution

Except for live vaccine product, preservative is required for multidose package vaccines. Vaccines manufactured for and used in pandemic situations will continue to have to be supplied as multidose preparations and preservative will be required. Safer alternatives to mercury for vaccine manufacture and preservation, that will neither affect vaccine efficacy nor compromise the poverty reduction goals of countries, do exist.

The Treaty

SafeMinds urges Government and Civil delegates at this first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to prepare a global legally binding instrument on Mercury to protect human health and the global environment:

- by recognizing that mercury from vaccine manufacture, distribution and use contributes to worldwide mercury releases through the production and delivery lifecycle;



- by recognizing the vulnerability of infants, children and women of child bearing age;
- by mandating the discontinuation of mercury in vaccine production so that developing countries do not become dumping grounds for mercury-preserved vaccines;
- by promoting the use of non-mercury preservatives as a substitute for mercury in vaccine production to reduce the release of mercury into the environment;
- by calling for firm and sensible solutions for the remediation and reclamation of waterways and soil affected by mercury and mercury compounds.

SafeMinds is a private nonprofit organization founded to investigate and raise awareness of the risks to infants and children of exposure to mercury from medical products, including thimerosal in vaccines. We seek to restore health and protect future generations by eradicating the devastation of autism and other injuries induced by mercury and other man-made causes. We accomplish this through scientific research, public awareness, and advocacy in public policy and legal arenas. For more information, please visit www.safeminds.org