

## **Alarming Water News**

### **Drugs...Coming to a faucet near you!**

Increasing evidence is showing that the drugs we consume, give to our family, to our pets and livestock are making their way into our underground aquifers, rivers and lakes.

As early as 1985 E.P.A. scientists have known that many of the drugs we consume and then excrete in urine and feces are showing up in sewage treatment plants across America.

Herman Bouwer of the U.S. Agricultural Research Service in Phoenix, AZ recalls noting that the cholesterol-lowering drug, clofibric acid, turned up in treated sewer water that was replenishing a reservoir supplying water to Phoenix residents. If clofibric acid can pass through our modern sewage treatment plants, what is to stop the more than 2,000 other drugs and chemicals that enter the treatment plant?

It is estimated that over 1 million boats, motor homes, backwoods cabins, trailers and homes built without proper sewage disposal systems dump their untreated sewage into our U.S. environment.

“Canadian cities discharge over a trillion liters per year of untreated sewage into surface waters and oceans, almost all of which contain drug residues” said Dr. Warren Bell in his presentation at Ecosummit 2000.

Some of the more common drugs and chemicals found in our water are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen, analgesics, beta-blockers, heart medications, drugs for epilepsy, chemotherapy drugs, hormones and personal care products.

A documented study by the U.S. Government showed that 80% of streams tested in 30 states contained pharmaceuticals and hormones.

The E.P.A. is in charge of protecting us from pesticides and other toxic industrial chemicals. Drugs however, are regulated by Health Departments, which possess little expertise in protection of our fragile natural ecosystems and water supplies. Evidently pharmaceuticals are not necessarily considered potential pollutants, even though up to 90% of these drugs could leave the body through urine and feces.

Pharmaceutical companies are creating new drugs faster than the E.P.A. can study and classify them. The E.P.A. has stated that the consumer is ultimately responsible for the quality of the water they consume.

**It has been noted through laboratory testing that activated carbon filters, ozone filters, and reverse osmosis filters remove most traces of these drugs and chemicals.**

References:

“Water Pollution from Drugs and Cosmetics”

By Janet Raloff for sciencenews.org, April 1, 2000

Herman Bouwer, American Chemical Society National Spring Meeting, March 22, 2000, San Francisco

“More Waters Test Positive for Drugs”

By Janet Raloff for sciencenews.org, April 1, 2000

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About the author.

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