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The Connection between Aspartame (Artificial Sweetener) and Panic Attacks, Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Memory Problems, and Other Mental Symptoms

(The following article is a letter to the editor written to Time Magazine. It is posted here because of its excellent references on the relationship between aspartame and mental symptoms. Further references are at the end of this article)

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I have read your article on Young and Bipolar, Aug 19, 2002. It says "Once called manic depression, the disorder afflicted adults. Now it's striking kids. Why? "

I personally believe the answer is obvious, but Time has known the true facts on aspartame for years and refuses to publish them.

If you had the ability to publish the truth, I would tell you to get in touch with psychiatrist Ralph Walton, M.D.. He is Professor and Chairman, Department of Psychiatry, Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine. In one statement he said: "We have known for years that when aspartame is ingested with a carbohydrate rich meal the usual physiologic increase in tryptophan is blocked, while brain phenylalanine and tyrosine concentrations are increased. These changes in amino acid neurotransmitter precursors could, I believe, alter indoleamine/catecholamine balance, and thus have a profound effect on mood and cognition ... depressed mood, anxiety, dizziness, panic attacks, nausea, irritability, impairment of memory and concentration."

Of course, bipolar is an affective disorder in which the patient exhibits both manic and depressive episodes.

Aspartame has 50% phenylalanine which as an isolate is neurotoxic and goes directly into the brain. Dr. Richard Wurtman of MIT explained this to Congress in 1985 and has done a great deal of research. He undoubtedly would not give an interview today. Perhaps if you read about him in the United Press International 8 month investigation of aspartame you would understand why. It's on <http://www.dorway.com>>www.dorway.com You see the phenylalanine also lowers the seizure threshold and Dr. Wurtman wanted to do seizure studies. He was threatened by Searle that if he did his research funds would be rejected and they were. But MIT is getting research funds now. The phenylalanine also depletes serotonin. And when you deplete serotonin it triggers MANIC DEPRESSION, anxiety, hallucinations, panic attacks, insomnia, paranoia, mood swings and even suicidal tendencies.

So Dr. Wurtman was very interested in the seizure issue and serotonin issue. Back in 1986 he was a real tiger and he understood very well that if you wanted valid research you needed independent studies. I have a copy of his introductory comments presented to the FDA on April 21, 1986 in which he said:

"The present system, in which the companies that sell our synthetic foods - like NutraSweet - fund virtually ALL of the studies, FDA-mandated or not, of their safety is too vulnerable to misuse: As we can discuss, if you like, when outside investigators propose studies that might yield the "wrong" answer, a large bag of "dirty tricks" is available for derailing those studies. We hope that the evolving aspartame study will provide impetus for a new mechanism, in which companies that manufacture new, synthetic food constituents (like NutraSweet's manufacturer, Monsanto), or those that insert it into their foods (like Coca-Cola or Pepsi-Cola, or the makers of Kool-Aid or Crystal Lite) will be obligated to support the research that affirms their product's safety, but will not be allowed to

choose exactly what studies are done, nor who conducts them."

Dr. Wurtman left us a lovely paper trail in the book *Dietary Phenylalanine and Brain Function*, edited by Richard J. Wurtman and Eva Ritter-Walker, Birkhauser.

H. J. Roberts, M.D., who declared Aspartame Disease to be a global plague has written the medical text, *Aspartame Disease: An Ignored Epidemic*, <http://www.aspartameispoison.com> or <http://www.sunsentpress.com>

There are chapters on the psychiatric and behavioral problems triggered by aspartame, drug interaction, and of course, the issue of bipolar and aspartame. And he brings out that there is considerable information existing concerning marked neuropsychologic changes when dopamine-serotonin balance is altered. And he says that decreased brain serotonin has been associated with insomnia, depression, anxiety, panic attacks, hallucinations, suicidal attempts, hostility and psychopathic states like Dr. Walton.

And Dr. Roberts also quotes Dr. Wurtman. He says that aspartame and its components can lower brain serotonin levels through several mechanisms:

"* Dr. Richard Wurtman demonstrated that aspartame inhibits the carbohydrate-induced synthesis of serotonin (Congressional Record - Senate 1985a, P. S 5511). Serotonin is an important component of the feedback system that helps limit one's consumption of carbohydrate to appropriate levels by blunting the carbohydrate craving.

* The amino acid tyrosine, derived from phenylalanine, reduces the amount of tryptophan that can cross the blood-brain barrier for utilization in serotonin production. "

Dr. Roberts says that the mounting scientific evidence for altered brain dopamine concentrations in mental illness is relevant.

"* The injection of dopamine (a metabolite of phenylalanine) into the brain ventricles of humans can precipitate psychotic episodes, including hallucinations.

* Wong et al (1986) studies the D2 dopamine receptor density in the caudate nucleus of normal volunteers and patients with schizophrenia by positron emission tomography (PET). Higher densities were noted in the schizophrenic group, even without prior neuroleptic drug treatment.

* Several aspartame reactors with severe neuropsychiatric features evidence brain changes by SPECT imaging studies.

* .. Dopaminergic influences in aspartame and other addictions (discussed in VII-G)

* More numerous D2 dopamine receptors have been found in the basal ganglia of schizophrenic patients obtained at postmortem examination,

compared to persons having no history of neurologic or psychiatric disease."

He also quotes Dr. Walton and says with regard to other changes:

"Dr. Ralph G. Walton (1986) urged physicians to bear in mind "the possible impact of aspartame on catecholamine and indolamine metabolism, and inquire about use of this artificial sweetener when assessing patients with affective disorders."

The brain edema and vascular stasis due to chronic methanol intake (10% of aspartame) could contribute to the neuropsychiatric manifestations of aspartame reactors.

The observation that tryptophan depletion in nonalcoholic young men can induce behavioral changes is pertinent in view of the depletion of tryptophan by aspartame consumption."

I might add at this point that Dr. Roberts says that suicide has become a public health crisis. One occurs ever 17 minutes in the US, ranking it third among causes of death for young people and second for college students. Accordingly, any substance that may contribute to suicide cannot be ignored, particularly when consumed in large amounts.

Now consider that Parents Magazine in Sept, 1999 wrote an article titled What's Happening To Our Children? They said that almost every family in the US has been affected and that by the time a child reaches the 4th level of high school, one out of four has contemplated suicide.

Remember that aspartame is used by 2/3rds of the population and 40% of our children. I hope this helps you to understand this epidemic. So whatever is happening to adults will also happen to children. Aspartame simply destroys the brain and this was proven in a study by Searle in South America although they did not publish it. An affidavit from the translator is on <http://www.dorway.com> A few months a study in Norway also showed that aspartame destroys the brain, especially in the areas of learning. In 1970 the famed Dr. John Olney who founded the field of neuroscience called excitotoxicity did the studies on aspartic acid which is 40% of aspartame and found that it caused lesions in the brains of mice. It is an excitotoxin.

Russell Blaylock, M.D., neurosurgeon wrote the book on excitotoxicity: Excitotoxins: The Taste That Kills, <http://www.amazon.com> And he too goes into the effect of aspartame on the brains of our children and even admits that it triggers such things as ADD and autism. I have heard both Doctors Roberts and Blaylock say that many people in mental hospitals today are simply aspartame victims.

Aspartame also triggers such things as brain hemorrhage, stroke and aneurysms, so you would expect the same thing in children. Not much shocks me but I know industry had to stay up a lot of nights to come up with the excuse heard on TV over two months ago. It was stated

that young children are having brain hemorrhages, aneurysms and strokes in increasing proportions but researchers say that the cause of this is that children get scared on roller coasters. Why they used such stupidity I don't know as it definitely insults the intelligence of the general public.

In Dr. Roberts discussion of Mania and "Bipolar" Depression in his medical text are these comments:

"Several aspartame reactors in this series had "bipolar" depression wherein the depression would alternate with periods of manic behavioral characterized by intense excitement and overactivity. As many as two million Americas suffer manic-depression.

"The ability of phenylalanine to stimulate the central nervous system, directly or through its conversion to other neurotransmitters is germane.

" Some studies suggest that bipolar and unipolar affective disorders are distinct entities - that is, in terms of familial prevalence, genetics (including twin studies), prognosis, and response to treatment (Schwartz 1987). Several observations are pertinent

"* Women outnumber men with unipolar depression by about two to one.
* Difference in unipolar and bipolar depression are reinforced by positron emission tomography studies (Schwartz 1987). Patients with unipolar depression have significantly higher local cerebral metabolic rates for glucose, but these are reduced in bipolar depression. Accordingly, a further reduction of the cerebral metabolic rate caused by aspartame or its by products might precipitate clinical depression in pre-disposed individuals.

* A subset of manic-depression appears linked to a dominant gene on the tip of the short arm of chromosome 11. The tyrosine hydroxylase gene which cascades the synthesis of dopamine, exists in this region."
* Whereas the cyclic antidepressants are more effective than lithium in unipolar depression, they tend to cause more behavioral disturbances in bipolar depression.

Dr. Roberts gives the case history of a 67 year old man that had been treated for bipolar depression, essential tremor and a labyrinthine syndrome. He fared well for several years on small doses of propranolol and lithium. He says that one month prior to his June 1986 visit, the tremor and vertigo intensified, coupled with "increased mood elevation." On direct questioning, he admitted to recent consumption of aspartame products. His symptoms promptly subsided when he avoid them and did not recur over the ensuing year, notwithstanding enormous stress because of his wife's serious illness during that period.

Dr. Ralph Walton did a study on aspartame discussed in this medical text.

"Walton, Hudock, and Green-Waite (1993) dramatically demonstrated the adverse effect of aspartame intake in patients with a history of depression. They administered aspartame (30 mg/kg) daily or a placebo for seven days in a double-blind challenge to 40 patients with unipolar depression and a similar number of persons without a history of psychiatric problems. The NutraSweet Company apparently refused to supply these researchers with aspartame, so analytically certified USP grade aspartame was purchased from a chemical distributor.

"The frequency and severity of depression, headache, nervousness, difficulty in remembering, insomnia, fatigue and malaise were striking among patients with a history of depression after ingesting aspartame, compared to the placebo, both in these patients and nondepressed volunteers. Persons without a history of depression did not manifest frequent or severe symptoms when given aspartame. The severity of reactions among patients with a history of depression proved sufficiently alarming that the Institutional Review Board had to halt this project prematurely.

"* Three participants spontaneously volunteered that they felt "poisoned" after taking the product later determined to be aspartame.
* A 42 year old Ph.D. psychologist with a history of recurrent severe depression experienced pain in one eye, followed by retinal detachment requiring emergency surgery.
* Another depressed patient evidenced conjunctival bleeding for the first time during the week she ingested aspartame.
* Individual patients with a history of depression experienced swollen lips, a bad taste in the mouth, facial numbness, weight gain and irritability - complaints not reported by nondepressed volunteers.

"This experience also has raised questions about the nature of the aspartame supplied for published "negative" double-blind studies."

Perhaps you can understand now why aspartame manufacturers have fought to prevent independent, corporate neutral research.

Dr. Roberts continues but since this is getting long I'm sure you can see the bottom line. He is stressing that the decrease of serotonin by aspartame administration has considerable relevance to depression and other psychological problems. He mentions that Smith et al (1997) reported that the rapid lowering of brain serotonin can precipitate clinical depressive symptoms in untreated individuals vulnerable to major depression. Also that aspartame decreases the availability of L-tryptophan (a precursor of serotonin) and alters its balance with norepinephrine, another important neurotransmitter. Also that some have likened its effects to that of a lesion in the lateral hypothalamus causing depression, other psychiatric problems, and eating disorders. Dr. Walton I know has written about this and the report is on web.

You might want to read The Lancet 1987;2:949-950 where Dr. Roberts says there is considerable evidence for the diminished turnover of

brain serotonin in depression and behavioral disturbances, including suicide.

Could it get any worse? Yes, how could a physician treat these patients if he didn't know about aspartame since it interacts with antidepressants. For instance, the serotonin elevating action of fluoxetine (Prozac) for treating depression could be counteracted by aspartame. It can block tryptophan entry into the brain, thereby inhibiting synthesis of serotonin! This is discussed in the chapter on drug interaction and antidepressant drugs. Aspartame interacts with just about every drug used to treat the problems it causes!

Obviously after 20 years on the market we know what aspartame does. Doctors who have seen aspartame victims in the trenches of medical practice for years are experts and constantly alert the public through writings. But we have a reluctant press who could have done something about this issue years ago. Dr. P. Maxwell Foshay, Editor, Cleveland Journal of Medicine said it the best way back in 1900:

"It will thus be seen that medical journalism is in a state of chaos .. The greed for advertising patronage leads, the editor only too often to prostitute his pen or his pages to the advertiser, so long as he can secure the coveted revenue."

In 1999 Time Magazine was on <http://www.dorway.com> investigating an email that made world news on the World Environmental Conference. It was signed Nancy Markle but I was the one who lectured. Time's Mrs. Gorman admitted that she had seen an almost identical post which was my original. So she knew I was the author and instead of calling me wrote that it was a hoax. Basically it read like a Monsanto commercial down to "Sweeten Your Life Without Shortening It". A good example of reverse psychology. Flooded with mail Time refused to retract their misinformation stumbling many consumers back on aspartame only to suffer such things as grand mal seizures. Mission Possible gave Time Magazine the award for The Most Irresponsible Journalism - 1999, and were added to the Hall of Shame. www.dorway.com/nomarkle.html

Monsanto could not put out the fire, however, because the email saturated the globe and sold the NutraSweet Company. But as Mohammed Ali once said: "They can run but they can't hide." Today we are taking case histories for class action having to do with the brain tumors, blindness, eye deterioration and seizures.

Because aspartame is also an abortifacient millions of babies have been murdered in their mother's womb. Dr. James Bowen said in Aspartame Murders Infants on web:

"At every point in the fertility process aspartame destroys, beginning with the gleam in Mom and Pop's eyes, it ruins female sexual response and induces male sexual dysfunction. Beyond this, aspartame disrupts fetal development by aborting it or inducing defects. And if a live child is born aspartame may have heinously damaged the DNA of the baby, cursing future generations."

It's a shame that Time Magazine doesn't consider the lives of our children to be more important than the advertising funds of such companies as NutraSweet, Coke and Pepsi, for example.

Today aspartame is estimated to be in 9000 products and climbing and 100 countries of the world. It is in pediatric prescription drugs like pediatric penicillin, Augmentin, chewable Tylenol, chewable Benadryl, pediatric vitamins, etc. Our children don't have a chance.

If you go to <http://www.greatfallspro.com> www.mpwhi.com and scroll down to banners you can read Dr. John Olney's entire report to the Board of Inquiry of the FDA. Here you can read his prophecy of what will happen to the brains of our children if aspartame is approved, and this prophecy has now been fulfilled.

I don't expect for Time Magazine to expose the aspartame issue to the public because they have known the real facts for years and only added to misinformation. So I leave you with the words of Patrick Henry:

"Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves longer."

Further References:

Book: Aspartame Disease: An Ignored Epidemic,
<http://www.aspartameispoison.com>
<http://www.aspartameispoison.com> www.sunsentpress.com

Web site: <http://www.mpwhi.com>

Update 2007: New article by Psychiatrist Ralph Walton, M.D. on aspartame and psychiatric disease and bipolar.
http://www.mpwhi.com/aspartame_and_psychiatric_disorders.htm Also, his article in "Report for Schools", articles by the experts on aspartame on how it destroys the brains of the unborn and our children: http://www.mpwhi.com/report_on_aspartame_and_children.htm This also has an indepth article by the ADD people, Feingold who banned aspartame from their diet years ago.

The whole story of how this addictive excitoneurotoxic carcinogenic drug that interacts with "all" antidepressants got on the market through the political chicanery of Don Rumsfeld is in the movie, Sweet Misery: A Poisoned World, www.soundandfury.com

In July 2007 a 25 year old actress, Abby Cormack in New Zealand almost died from aspartame and was about to be diagnosed as bipolar. She saw the list of 92 symptoms by the FDA on our web site and got off of it and her bipolar symptoms disappeared. I flew to New Zealand and lectured with Abby and Sue Kedgley from Parliament in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch, New Zealand. There so many aspartame bipolar cases there. Here is her

story: http://www.mpwhi.com/abby_cormack_story.htm Here is what the aspartame experts said about

Abby: http://www.mpwhi.com/experts_on_aspartame_and_abby_cormack.htm

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www.mpwhi.com , www.dorway.com and www.wnho.net

Aspartame Toxicity Center, www.holisticmed.com/aspartame

Aspartame Information List, www.mpwhi.com scroll down to banners