

PROGRESS AT REPLACING MERCURY EQUIPMENT IN THE HEALTH SECTOR IN SÃO PAULO - BRAZIL - 2008

Ph.D. Cecília Zavariz

The increase of global quantity of mercury in the environment, caused by human-activity, and its consequences, has been awaking world concern for the need of effective preventive measures at restraining this picture.

The risk this bioaccumulative toxic agent represents to life has been preventing us from adopting several work fronts aiming at banning anthropogenic sources.

With a lot of work and even not being able to count on financial resources, we managed to implement a number of activities.

Using for reference both UNEP/PNUMA–United Nations Environment Program's adopted policy to encourage global actions to reduce/ban the use of mercury and WHO – World Health Organization's recommendation for the health sector to replace mercury for mercury-free equipment, we have been achieving a lot of success in this work.

From the onset of the work in 2003 to this date we have achieved a great progress at fully replacing mercury equipment used in the health sector, such as (clinic, environment, fridge, freezer, oven and water-bath) thermometers and sphygmomanometers.

We have been steadily organizing meetings, visits, giving talks and participating in events in several places on the mercury theme. We also prepared written instructions, such as for example, “*Procedures to pack mercury equipment to be collected and recycled*”.

We have been able to conscientize, sensibelize and awake in people a readiness to take some actions to minimize the risks of mercury. This has been fundamental to implement mercury equipment replacement in the health sector. We have found allies in the most diverse areas, such as administrative directors, managers, part-owners, doctors, biomedical physicians, engineers, environment professionals, biologists, nurses, nurse technicians, work safety technicians, people in charge of buying, human rights, maintenance and equipment administration departments, among others. In each institution we have reached one or more individuals who embraced the cause and endeavored to meeting the goal and banning the use of mercury equipment.

In May 2007 we organized, through the Mercury National Program, the “**Journey to ban the use of mercury equipment**”, in partnership with CREMESP–Medicine Regulatory Council for São Paulo, University of São Paulo Public Health College and SINDHOSP–São Paulo Hospitals Trade Union. These entities participated in the program and collaborated in its preparation by means of material and services, such as, dissemination of the event, availability of the auditorium, support staff for the registration desk, reception and handling of the event equipment. The international guest of the organization, Salud Sin Dano, funded its coming to participate and give a lecture as well as the Secretaria Municipal do Verde e do Meio Ambiente, Weight and Measure Institute and the ONGs, ACPO–Association Against POPs and AEIMM–Mercury Exposed and Poisoned Association. All speakers and delegates paid for their own transportation and food. The event was free of charge and counted on the presence of professionals of several areas as well as public and private institutions. Special Mentions were granted to forty (40) hospitals that had completed the replacement of all mercury equipment until that date. The 1st edition of “**Mercury-free Health**” booklet, with ten thousand copies was released and distributed, with the financial support of Salud Sin Daño, in association with PNUMA – United Nations Program for the Environment and CREMESP. The booklet brings main information on mercury, with illustrations on the messages, and aims at conscientizing people on the risks and encouraging practices on attitudes to ban its use. This edition was sold out in six months' time.

In January 2007 we started discussions with analysis laboratory and diagnosis sectors. In December 2007 we organized the “**I National Journey to Ban Mercury Equipment in the Analysis Laboratory and Diagnosis Sectors**” in São Paulo, in the same format of the previous event, and counted on the participation of professionals from several regions of the country and on the support of the Mercury National Program/MTE/SRT/SP; SINDHOSP-State of São Paulo Hospitals, Clinics and Laboratories Trade Union; SINDHOSFIL-Philanthropic Hospitals Trade Union; FEHOESP-State of São Paulo Hospitals, Clinics and Laboratories Federation; FEHOSP-Federation of Santas Casas and Beneficient Hospitals; SBPCML-Brazilian Society for Clinic Pathology and Laboratory Medicine; DASA-Diagnósticos América S/A; Fleury Medicina e Saúde; Rhesus Médica Auxiliar Ltda.; Schmillevitch Centro Diagnóstico

Ltda., Santa Catarina Hospital, Secretaria Municipal do Verde e Meio Ambiente, ACPO and AEIMM. The 2nd “**Mercury-free Health**” booklet was released on that occasion, with twenty six thousand intended copies, which reproduction was funded by: SINDHOSP, SINDHOSFIL, FEHOESP, FEHOSP, Fleury Medicina e Saúde; Rhesus Médica Auxiliar Ltda. and Schmillevitch Centro Diagnóstico Ltda.

The “**Regional Campaign to Ban Mercury**” took place in April 2008 in Piracicaba city, aiming at sensibilizing professional of the region for the mercury issue in partnership with Piracicaba's Santa Casa de Misericórdia and Environment Development Secretary's Office of Piracicaba. Professional from several areas and nineteen cities of the State of São Paulo took part in the event (Piracicaba, Limeira, Pirassununga, hortolândia, Americana, Catanduva, São Pedro, Tiete, Capivari, Iracemápolis, Rio Claro, Santa Bárbara D'Oeste, Santa Maria da Serra, Itirapina, Ipeuna, Santa Gertrudes, Leme, Araras e São Paulo). Those present showed interest in disseminating the idea to replace mercury equipment in their relevant regions.

We have kept the activity of visiting institutions, signing agreements, following up replacement processes, carrying out local inspections to check the carried out replacement and granting them **Special Mentions** for stopping using mercury equipment, as a token of acknowledgment and encouragement, given that there is no legislation in Brazil yet prohibiting the use of mercury equipment.

The work has been having a significant progress, so that until **June 2008**, the **full replacement of mercury equipment** was noticed in **one hundred two** (102) out of one hundred and thirty (130) hospitals in São Paulo. Other twenty eight (28) hospitals which undertook the commitment to carry out the replacement are in the process of materializing such undertaking, which should take place by the end of the current year.

In the laboratory analysis and diagnosis sectors we managed to sign agreements with six (6) companies of the sector up to June 2008, which have one hundred and forty four (144) units in São Paulo, **three** (3) of these companies having already fully replaced their mercury equipment in one hundred and eleven (111) units.

In 2008 we started having meetings with Blood Banks, **one** of which has already completed its replacement of mercury equipment in its headquarters and other units located in other hospitals.

We keep our readiness to expand this work to other regions in the country and, to achieve such purpose, we are looking forward to counting on the support of both national and international agencies and entities.

Attached is a list of entities which have banned the use of mercury equipment in São Paulo.



Picture 1- Cecília Zavariz and Verônica Odriozola in the launching of “Mercury-free Health” booklet, during the Journey to ban the use of mercury equipment, São Paulo, May, 2007.



Picture 2 - I National Journey to Ban Mercury Equipment in the Analysis Laboratory and Diagnosis Sectors, São Paulo, December, 2007.



Picture 3 – Lecture by Dr Cecília Zavariz in the event Regional Campaign to Ban Mercury in Piracicaba, April, 2008.

LIST OF ENTITIES WHICH HAVE BANNED THE USE OF MERCURY EQUIPMENT IN SÃO PAULO, JUNE, 2008.

HOSPITALS

1. **Associação do Sanatório Sírio - Hospital do Coração**
2. **Hospital Alemão Oswaldo Cruz**
3. **Hospital Alvorada Moema (Medial Saúde S/A)**
4. **Hospital Alvorada Santo Amaro (Medial Saúde S/A)**
5. **Hospital Alvorada Unidade de Reabilitação (Medial Saúde S/A)**
6. **Pronto Socorro de Reabilitação São Bernardo do Campo (Medial Saúde SA**
7. **IGESP S/A**
8. **Hospital Paulista Ltda.**
9. **Hospital Albert Einstein (Sociedade Beneficente Israelita Brasileira)**
10. **Hospital Santa Isabel - Irmandade da Santa Casa de Misericórdia de SP**
11. **Hospital de Clínicas Jardim Helena**
12. **Hospital João Evangelista**
13. **Hospital Sancta Maggiore (CME–Consultoria Médica e Empresarial Ltda.)**

14. Hospital Saint Paul (DIOSP – Serviços Médicos Ltda.)
15. Hospital São Jorge Serviços Nefrológicos Ltda.
16. Hospital São Conrado (Med Life Saúde Ltda.)
17. Hospital da Face Ltda.
18. Hospital Santa Bárbara (Orion Participações e Administração Ltda.)
19. Hospital Rubem Berta (ADLM Serviços Médicos Ltda.)
20. Hospital Iguatemi (AMESP Saúde Ltda.)
21. Hospital da Água Funda (CAISM - Centro de Atenção Integrada em Saúde Mental Dr. David Capistrano da Costa Filho)
22. Hospital Paulistano (Lifecare Participações Hospitalares Ltda.)
23. Hospital São Rafael (Centro Médico Especializado Ltda)
24. Hospital e Maternidade 8 de Maio Ltda.
25. Hospital e Pronto Socorro Nova Iguatemi Ltda.
26. Hospital Santa Cecília (Intermédica Sistema Saúde S/A)
27. Hospital e Pronto Socorro Portinari Ltda.
28. Hospital e Pronto Socorro Itamaraty (Green Line Sistema de Saúde Ltda.)
29. Hospital Bosque da Saúde
30. Hospital Geral de Pedreira (Associação e Congregação de Santa Catarina)
31. Hospital Evaldo Foz (Saúde ABC Planos de Saúde Ltda.)
32. Hospital de Maternidade Casa Verde Ltda.

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