

May 5, 2010

Yves Chartier, World Health Organization
Joshua Karliner, Health Care Without Harm
WHO/HCWH Mercury-Free Health Care Initiative
c/o Salud sin Daño/HCWH International Coordination
Tamborini 2838
1429 Capital Federal
Argentina



Toxics Link
for a toxics-free world

Dear Mr. Chartier and Karliner,

Thank you for the invitation to join the Mercury-Free Health Care Initiative, co-led by World Health Organization and Health Care Without Harm.

We understand that this global initiative aims to achieve virtual elimination of mercury-based thermometers and sphygmomanometers over the next decade and their substitution with accurate, economically viable alternatives.

We also understand that this initiative is a component of the UN Environment Programme's Mercury Products Partnership, which is led by the US Environmental Protection Agency. As such, this health care initiative is contributing to a broader effort to promote environmental health by reducing the amount of mercury emitted into the global environment.

Toxics Link has been involved since 1996 in substituting mercury-based medical devices. Toxics link published its first Report on National status on mercury use in India in 2003, and this was followed by another national level report on status of mercury use in Healthcare sector. The latter created a lot of discussion on mercury issues in the Parliament of the country and at the level of all environmental boards and agencies in India. Finally, the Delhi government was asked by the center to act on the report and initially the response came out as Public Notices and warnings in leading dailies. Further negotiations with the Government, led to the formulation of an office order, which restricted the use of mercury in Delhi hospitals. The order instructed hospitals not to procure any new mercury equipment and start phase out of these.

After discussions with the Central Government over the last year, the Ministry of Health has issued a Mercury Guideline for all the Healthcare establishments (2010) under the Government of India, which actually covers around 1700 hospitals, which include most big research and referral hospitals. This guideline also calls for a phase out and proper spill management and disposal.

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I write you today to accept your invitation and express our willingness to join the effort.

As part of the Mercury-Free Health Care Initiative we will continue our work by continuously pushing for a national policy on mercury phase out from health care sector. Toxics Link is also trying to catalyze the discussion on the production of quality measuring instruments at affordable prices, which will make a significant contribution towards the mercury free initiatives.

We look forward to collaborating with you in this most important endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'R. Agarwal', with a horizontal line underneath.

Ravi Agarwal
Director

Cc : Thomas M. Groeneveld
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