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of HIV Prevention and Care

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Global Strategies for HIV Prevention

September 9, 2009

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I read your 9/14/09 article with great interest. I could not agree with you more on the issues you have raised. I have raised similar issues but they have, much to my surprise, gone ignored. It seems that no matter what is said about desalination plans are moving ahead.

I have attached a copy of a letter to the editor of the IJ that I wrote several years ago.

My field is pediatrics, immunology and virology and as an academic physician I have long studied the effect of infectious agents, viral particles, and toxins on the most susceptible of humans -- but he is an infants. I found the environmental impact report grossly inadequate and - it failed to address serious concerns regarding the impact of concentrating known and unknown contaminants which might result in sterility. There is inadequate testing for drugs which are known to be in wastewater and which can result in sensitization to critically needed antibiotics and other drugs. There is also concern that wastewater contains toxins which decrease fertility. This is just a partial list of the concerns that desalination raises that were not adequately addressed in the report.

During the beginning of the AIDS epidemic we were told repeatedly that the blood supply was safe. It was only after we reported the first patient with blood transfusion AIDS that the alarms were sounded. This experience is a potent reminder that we are too often ignorant of the dangers because we don't adequately search out clauses. The use of recycled wastewater is on my list of introducing a danger into our environment and into our very beings.

Is there any way that we can insist on an adequate environmental impact report that thoroughly analyzes wastewater to prevent it from being introduced into Marin County as a supposedly "safe" means of increasing the water supply.

Sincerely,

Arthur J Ammann MD, President

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Independent Journal

Desalination. Rubbing salt into our wounds.

Plans for a desalination plant in Marin? Have we already forgotten the energy crisis? Energy costs are soaring and it is suggested that we solve our water crisis with an expensive energy dependent method. In 1990, at time when energy costs were half of what they are now, a MMWD pilot plant plan was abandoned. Desalination takes energy – lots of it – up to 4,900 kilowatts to produce one acre-foot of water. It also takes energy to transport fuel for desalination and dispose of wastes, trucking them to a “safe” site. None of these expenses are under our control. Once built, the demand and cost will only increase. Then there are the toxic wastes. Bay water is downstream from large oil refiners, insecticide run-off from Northern California farms, and decades of accumulated toxins. Required expensive filtration will consume more energy. Where will the toxins go – back into the bay in a concentrated form or to an undesignated landfill (read more energy for transportation)? To meet an initial projected production of 15 million gallons/day, 100 million gallons of bay water would need to be processed with 85 million gallons of water. Now contaminated with concentrated chemicals and biocides it would be pumped back into a fragile bay. Read the Coastal Commission report <http://coastal.ca.gov/desalrpt/dtitle.html>. We don't need to spend over \$1 million to find out what is already known.

Incidentally, where has all the water gone that all of us have been conserving for the past decade?

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