

Sin Taxes, BPA, Dysport, Altria, Ex-Lax Fish

By ACSH Staff — February 1, 2010

Dr. Ross on NY1

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross lent his expert opinion to *NY1* for their report on "sin taxes" and the soda tax currently being proposed for the state of New York. [You can watch the video here while the link lasts](#) [1].

WSJ on BPA

The weekend edition of the *Wall Street Journal* included an editorial, "[Baby Bottle Red Alert](#) [2]," which exposes the anti-BPA movement for continuing to sound alarms about the chemical despite a lack of scientific evidence to suggest that it is dangerous.

"It's a very sound, science-based editorial," says Dr. Ross. "It points out the hypocrisy of these activists who go after BPA without knowing anything about the science and without any hope of a possible substitute for BPA should they get it banned. We applaud the *Wall Street Journal* editorial department for speaking out against the hype."

The First Warning of Its Kind

[The New York Times reports](#) [3], "The F.D.A. recently sent a warning letter to Dr. Leslie Baumann, a well-known dermatologist and clinical researcher in Miami Beach, citing the doctor for expressing premature enthusiasm in the media about Dysport, an injectable antiwrinkle drug the agency had not yet approved ... this is believed to be the first time the agency has warned an individual investigator — a medical researcher who oversees a clinical trial — for apparently promoting an unapproved drug."

"Her recommendations are premature," says ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan. "The drug isn't even approved yet. So if she says this and her patients come to her and say that they want it, she would have to say, 'I can't give it to you.' It raises the question: what is her purpose in seeming to promote it?"

"The next question is: does she have a proprietary interest in the company manufacturing this drug?" adds Dr. Ross. "Even if she is just giving her unbiased opinion based on trials, it's inappropriate since she's involved with the trial. We at ACSH are as opposed to the conflict-of-interest police as much as anyone, but clearly someone with a financial interest in a drug shouldn't be involved in its clinical trial. I don't know if that's going on here, but I don't see any other reason that she would be recommending it already. I don't think those questions are answered in this article."

ACSH's Jeff Stier asks, "At what point can a researcher share truthful results of scientific research with outsiders? I'm aware of the valid ethical and FDA guidelines, but it's still a question worthy of consideration."

Market Shift Towards Harm-Reduction

Sunday's *New York Times* describes how America's leading cigarette manufacturer [Altria \(formerly Philip Morris\)](#) is beginning to shift its weight behind smokeless products [4], including snus, as regulations on smoking have tightened.

"Marketing smokeless products as less harmful is something that the tobacco industry is now saying is going to be the wave of the future," says Dr. Ross. "Reynolds American led the way on this a few years ago with their focus on smokeless tobacco."

"This is still much too limited," says Dr. Whelan. "There is a complete spectrum of non-combustion tobacco products that isn't being discussed. We also need to talk about alternative nicotine delivery products to help addicted smokers quit. I predict that major tobacco companies will be absorbing the e-cigarette in some way, probably with enormous technological improvements, whatever they might be."

Beware the Butterfish

[A State Representative in Hawaii has drafted a bill that prohibits catching, selling or even possessing butterfish](#) [5] (a.k.a. "the Ex-Lax fish") in Hawaii. According to KRQE, "The oily walu or Escolar contains a high-level of wax esters in its tissue that are beneficial to its deep-sea survival, but can be unkind to humans ... Native Hawaiians called the fish Maku'u or exploding intestines. It is banned in Japan and Italy."

"This could be a valuable thing to know for people who've never heard of this," says Dr. Ross. "If intestinal problems are common from eating this fish, it should at least be labeled for the unwary."

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Links

[1] http://www.ny1.com/8-queens-news-content/ny1_living/112929/sticky-tax-proposal-may-prove-sweet-for-state

[2]

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703906204575027260626461950.html?mod=WSJ_hpp_sections_opin

[3] <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/01/business/01wrinkle.html?src=tw&tw=nytimeshealth>

[4] <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/31/business/31altria.html?src=tw&tw=nytimeshealth>

[5] http://www.krqe.com/dpps/news/strange/lawmaker-wants-to-ban-ex-lax-fish_3212804

[6] <https://www.acsh.org/.../..>