

Water Alarm

Prozac has been found in our drinking water. Norman Baker MP, Liberal Democrat shadow environment secretary, can't have been drinking much water lately because he seems very upset:

Mr Baker said: "This looks like a case of hidden mass medication of the unsuspecting public and is potentially a very worrying health issue..."

"It is alarming that there is no monitoring of levels of Prozac and other pharmacy residues in our drinking water..."

We have bad news for Mr Baker: water isn't perfectly clean and it never will be. Even the freshest mountain stream contains traces of the **EU's dreaded nitrates**, from thunderstorms – and is quite frighteningly open to anything that might happen to fall into it out of a bird overhead. Enclose all mountain streams in hygienic plastic pipes, we say! The more chemicals you want to take out of the water, the more money it costs, and there is a limit to how much you can spend before it becomes harmful to divert any more money from other goods. Nor is it alarming that the government doesn't look for Prozac in our drinking water, because there is no reason to think that it will be there in toxic levels. Looking would be a waste of money.

However, we expect that Mr Baker's attempts to make a molehill into the Matterhorn will continue because he, like many other environmentalists, suffers from such a deficiency of proportion and perspective that no conceivable level of precaution would satisfy him and no amount of Prozac-laced drinking water would calm him.

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That's Not All

I hope he doesn't find out about all of the dihydrogen monoxide in the water!

Gil

by **Gil** on Tue, 08/10/2004 - 03:43 | [reply](#)

Shouldn't the comment 'Subject' be optional?

I'm more upset by all the PrO.zac!! in my mailbox.

by [Kevin](#) on Tue, 08/10/2004 - 12:52 | [reply](#)

Hear hear!

Most people seem to think there's a fundamental aura-like difference between molecules that come from "pure", "natural" sources and dirty, man-made "chemicals". But they all pop into and out of existence within the same planetary system and they're all composed of atoms, which are in turn composed of protons, neutrons and electrons, which are in turn ... blah blah. A molecule of dihydrogen monoxide produced by a car engine is *exactly* the same as the water molecule that gently diffuses from the leaf of an alpine shrub.

Another common error is to assume that an impurity is undesirable or toxic at any concentration, however low. So, no level of prozac is acceptable. Even 1 molecule of prozac per litre of river water is unacceptable. This is nuts - the dose makes the poison.

Environmentalists might do better to draw attention to certain other molecules which are *deliberately* introduced into mammalian bodies with government approval.

Hexafluorosilicic acid and ethylmercury are both highly toxic. It's illegal to pour them down the sink, put them in rivers or release them into the open air. However, the first is added to public water supplies in several parts of the world because it supposedly reduces tooth decay slightly in young teenagers. (The studies that support this practice are dated and dubious, for example they were not performed blindly.) The second substance is a breakdown product of thiomersal, a preservative used in vaccines injected into small babies in the UK (while stocks last). The microgram quantities involved probably haven't caused any harm, but ... whoa! Considering the large number of other activities in our culture where the use of heavy metals has been phased out, did vaccines have to come last?

by [Tom Robinson](#) on Wed, 08/11/2004 - 00:14 | [reply](#)

the point?

Is that by the pint or the liter or by the hogshead?

I say ban ridiculous stories. Remove the nut cases. Without ridiculous stories and nut cases there would be nothing to rail on about.

Water is the universal solvent. Large amounts of water drunk in immoderation are toxic. Too much water and vital balances of the body are disturbed.

Beware of water overdose. Alarum, alarum!

by a reader on Wed, 08/11/2004 - 02:42 | [reply](#)

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