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The Fluoride Wars: How a Modest Public Health Measure Became America's Longest Running Political Melodrama

R. Allan Freeze, Jay H. Lehr

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A lively account of fluoridation and its discontents

Since its first implementation in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1945, public drinking water fluoridation and its attendant conflicts, controversies, and conspiracy theories serve as an object lesson in American science, public health, and policymaking. In addition to the arguments on the issue still raging today, the tale of fluoridation and its discontents also resonates with such present concerns as genetically modified foods, global warming response, nuclear power, and environmental regulation.

Offering the best current thinking on the issue, The Fluoride Wars presents a witty and detailed social history of the fluoridation debate in America, illuminating the intersection of science and politics in our recent past. This reader-friendly assessment explores the pro- and anti-fluoridation movements, key players, and important events. Full of amusing and vivid anecdotes and examples, this accessible recounting includes:

- A careful and non-condescending look at the hard science, popular science, pseudo-science, and junk science involved
- A look at fluoride issues including dosage, cost, financial and funding interests, fluorosis, and problems of risk-cost-benefit analysis
- The back-and-forth drama between pro- and anti-fluoridation factions, with all its claims, counterclaims, insults, acrimony, and lawsuits
- Case studies of various cities and their experiences with municipal water fluoridation initiatives
- Fluorophobia and popular conspiracy theories involving fluoride
- The colorful characters in the debate including activists, scientists, magicians, and politicians

A richly and considerately told tale of American science and public life, The Fluoride Wars offers an engrossing history to both interested general readers and specialists in public health, dentistry, policymaking, and related fields.

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