

CDC rebuttal from WAPF

<http://www.westonaprice.org/press/cdc-cherry-picks-data-to-make-case-against-raw-milk>

also linked here: <http://www.globenewswire.com/newsroom/news.html?d=246790>

also linked here: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/opinions/89311/>

CDC Cherry Picks Data to Make Case Against Raw Milk

Agency ignores data that shows dangers of pasteurized milk

Written by Kimberly Hartke, Publicist, The Weston A. Price Foundation

February 22, 2012

[Watch Harvard Raw Milk Debate](#) OR

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLRdihFi6gw&context=C3280be7AD0EgsToPDskKldOT0LgeJ9pGStYY2P77G>

WASHINGTON, DC, February 22, 2012. In a press release issued yesterday, authors affiliated with the Centers for Disease Control claim that the rate of outbreaks caused by unpasteurized milk and products made from it was 150 times greater than outbreaks linked to pasteurized milk.” The authors based this conclusion on an analysis of reports submitted to the CDC from 1993 to 2006.

According to the Weston A. Price Foundation, the CDC has manipulated and cherry picked this data to make raw milk look dangerous and to dismiss the same dangers associated with pasteurized milk.

“What consumers need to realize, first of all,” said Sally Fallon Morell, president of the Weston A. Price Foundation, “is that the incidence of foodborne illnesses from dairy products, whether pasteurized or not, is extremely low. For the 14-year period that the authors examined, there was an average of 315 illnesses a year from all dairy products for which the pasteurization status was known. Of those, there was an average of 112 illnesses each year attributed to all raw dairy products and 203 associated with pasteurized dairy products.

“In comparison, there are almost 24,000 foodborne illnesses reported each year on average. Whether pasteurized or not, dairy products are simply not a high risk product.”

Because the incidence of illness from dairy products is so low, the authors’ choice of the time period for the study affected the results significantly, yet their decision to stop the analysis with the year 2006 was not explained. The CDC’s data shows that there were significant outbreaks of foodborne illness linked to pasteurized dairy products the very next year, in 2007: 135 people became ill from pasteurized cheese contaminated with *e. coli*, and three people *died* from pasteurized milk contaminated with listeria (www.cdc.gov/foodborneoutbreaks/Default.aspx).

Outbreaks from pasteurized dairy were also a significant problem in the 1980s. In 1985, there were over 16,000 confirmed cases of Salmonella infection that were traced back to pasteurized milk from a single dairy. Surveys estimated that the actual number of people who became ill in that outbreak were over 168,000, “making this the largest outbreak of salmonellosis ever identified in the United States” at that time, according to an article in *the Journal of the American Medical Association*.

According to Fallon Morell “In the context of the very low numbers of illnesses attributed to dairy in general, the authors’ decision to cut the time frame short, as compared to the available CDC data, is troubling and adds to questions about the bias in this publication.”

According to Fallon Morell, the CDC's authors continue to obscure their study by failing to document the actual information they are using. They rely on reports, many of which are preliminary. Of the references related to dairy outbreaks, five are from outbreaks in other countries, several did not involve any illness, seven are about cheese-related incidents, and of the forty-six outbreaks they count, only five describe any investigations.

Perhaps most troubling is the authors' decision to focus on outbreaks rather than illnesses. An "outbreak" of foodborne illness can consist of two people with minor stomachaches to thousands of people with bloody diarrhea. In addressing the risk posed for individuals who consume a food, the logical data to examine is the number of illnesses, not the number of outbreaks.

"The authors acknowledge that the number of foodborne illnesses from raw dairy products (as opposed to outbreaks) were not significantly different in states where raw milk is legal to sell compared with states where it is illegal to sell," notes Judith McGeary of the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance. *"In other words, had the authors looked at actual risk of illness, instead of the artificially defined "outbreaks," there would have been no significant results to report."*

This does not end the list of flaws with the study, however. The link between the outbreaks and the legal status of raw dairy mixed an entire category of diverse products. Illnesses from suitcase style raw cheese or *queso fresco* were lumped together with illnesses attributed to fluid raw milk, a much less risky product. In the majority of states where the sale of raw fluid milk is allowed, the sale of *queso fresco* is still illegal. The authors had all of the data on which products were legal and which products allegedly caused the illnesses, yet chose not to use that data.

Similarly, to create the claimed numbers for how much riskier raw dairy products are, the authors relied on old data on raw milk consumption rates, rather than using the CDC's own food survey from 2006-2007. The newer data showed that about 3 percent of the population consumes raw milk—over nine million people--yet the authors chose instead to make conclusions based on the assumption that only 1 percent of the dairy products in the country are consumed raw.

The authors also ignored relevant data on the populations of each state. For example, the three most populous states in the country (California, Texas, and New York) all allow for legal sales of raw milk; the larger number of people in these states would logically lead to larger numbers of illnesses than in low-population states such as Montana and Wyoming and has nothing to do with the fact that raw milk is illegal in those states.

"It would hardly be surprising to see some sort of increase in foodborne illnesses related to a food where that food is legal," said McGeary. "If we banned ground beef, we'd see fewer illnesses related to ground beef products. Yet this new study fails to prove even that common-sense proposition, even as it claims to prove a great deal more. What the data really shows is that raw dairy products cause very few illnesses each year, even though the CDC data indicates that over 9 million people consume it."

The Weston A. Price Foundation is a 501C3 nutrition education foundation with the mission of disseminating accurate, science-based information on diet and health. Named after nutrition pioneer Weston A. Price, DDS, author of Nutrition and Physical Degeneration, the Washington, DC-based Foundation publishes a quarterly journal for its 13,000 members, supports 500 local chapters worldwide and hosts a yearly conference. The Foundation headquarters phone number is (202) 363-4394, www.westonaprice.org, info@westonaprice.org.

Contact: Kimberly Hartke, Publicist, The Weston A. Price Foundation
press@westonaprice.org
703-860-2711, 703-675-5557