



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

MAY 3 1999

Arnold P. Wendroff, Ph.D.
Research Associate and
Co-Principal Investigator
Mercury Poisoning Project
544 Eighth Street
Brooklyn, New York 11215-4201

Dear Dr. Wendroff:

This is in response to your letter to Dr. Jeffrey P. Koplan concerning the potential health hazards of mercury exposure in New York that may result from the use of elemental mercury for magico-religious purposes and your efforts to have the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) address this issue.

CDC and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) are fully aware of the health effects from exposure to elemental mercury. ATSDR has recently published a toxicological profile on the hazards posed by exposure of all forms of mercury, including the inorganic salts of mercury and methylmercury. In specific reference to your concerns about elemental mercury and its use in religious and ceremonial practices, the profile does alert the public to the health hazard posed by this type of exposure. We have enclosed a copy of the profile for your reference.

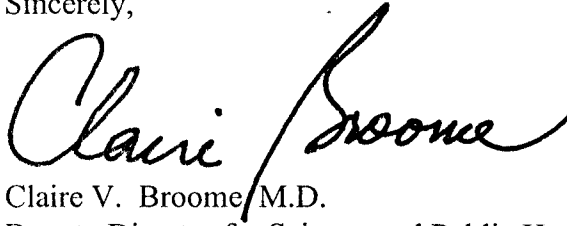
CDC is aware of surveys that document the sale of mercury in small amounts by shops located primarily in Hispanic or Caribbean communities. Although poison control centers have neither reported a case of elemental mercury poisoning related to magico-religious practices, nor has any case been reported by hospital emergency rooms, private physicians, or health care providers, CDC has taken several steps to prevent illness from this type of mercury exposure and has contacted the New York State Department of Health on this issue. The New York City Department of Health is conducting a study to determine whether exposure to mercury is occurring in Hispanic communities and whether the exposure represents a potential health threat. CDC is providing technical support to the Department of Health on this study. CDC and ATSDR staff also participate in ongoing discussions with the Environmental Protection Agency and interested State and municipal health departments regarding this issue.

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CDC is working diligently to prevent illness from mercury exposure, and our efforts are being conducted at the invitation of and in collaboration with public health and other officials who have jurisdictional authority in the area of concern.

Thank you for your concern regarding this matter and I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claire Broome". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Claire V. Broome M.D.
Deputy Director for Science and Public Health

Enclosure



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

MAY 4 1999

OFFICE OF
CIVIL RIGHTS

RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

In Reply Refer to:

Arnold P. Wendroff, Ph.D.
Mercury Poisoning Project
544 Eighth Street
Brooklyn, NY 11215-4201

EPA File No. 8R-99-R2

**Re: NOTIFICATION OF RECEIPT OF ADMINISTRATIVE
COMPLAINT**

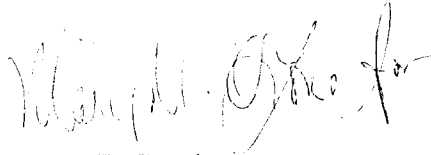
Dear Dr. Wendroff:

This letter is to notify you that the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has received your complaint dated March 8, 1999, alleging that the City and the State of New York has violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Title VI implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Part 7 (Nondiscrimination in Programs Receiving Federal Assistance from the EPA).

OCR will review the complaint for acceptance, rejection, or referral to another Federal agency pursuant to 40 C.F.R. §7.120 and will notify you about its decision. Additionally, EPA's Title VI regulations provide that OCR must attempt to resolve complaints informally whenever possible (40 C.F.R. §7.120(d)(2)). Accordingly, OCR will discuss, at any point during the process, offers to informally resolve the complaint, and will, to the extent appropriate, facilitate an informal resolution process and the involvement of affected stakeholders.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Mirza P. Baig in OCR by phone at (202) 260-3018, by e-mail at baig.mirza@epamail.epa.gov, or by mail to the U.S. EPA, Office of Civil Rights (Mail Code 1201), 401 M St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20460.

Sincerely,



Ann E. Goode
Director

cc: Governor George E. Pataki
Executive Chamber, Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Gary S. Guzy, Acting General Counsel
Office of General Counsel (MC 2310)

Rafael DeLeon, Acting Associate General Counsel
Office of Civil Rights Law
Office of General Counsel (MC 2399)

Steven A. Herman, Assistant Administrator
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (MC 2201A)

Barry E. Hill, Director
Office of Environmental Justice (MC 2201A)
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

Angela M. Chung, Special Assistant
Office of the Administrator (MC 1103)

Jeanne M. Fox, Jr.
Regional Administrator
EPA Region 2

Doug White
Environmental Justice Coordinator
EPA Region 2