



NOV - 9 2000

Dr. Robert A. Goyer
6405 Huntingridge Road
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27414

Dear Dr. Goyer:

I want to thank you and your National Research Council (NRC) committee colleagues for the illuminating discussion on November 3, 2000, about your report, "The Toxicological Effects of Methylmercury". My staff and I are extremely grateful for your time and effort as we consider your report's conclusions and implications for the Food and Drug Administration's seafood consumption advisory.

As you mentioned in our discussion, some media and stakeholder groups may be misinterpreting some of the report's statements with respect to the "60,000" figure. Therefore, we are seeking a clear explanation for the record to be sure the committee's conclusions are properly understood and applied appropriately. The two statements I refer to are:

"Available consumption data and current population and fertility rates indicate that over 60,000 newborns annually might be at risk for adverse neurodevelopmental effects from in utero exposure to MeHg" (page 325); and

"The committee estimates that over 60,000 children are born each year at risk for adverse neurodevelopmental effects due to in utero exposure to MeHg" (page 327).

In particular, we think it would aid the process to have, from you, a clear explanation of how the "60,000" number was derived, and what the term "at risk" means. We want to be sure that any statements about, or use of, this number by the FDA accurately reflects the precise intent of your committee.

As you know, we are gathering information and consulting stakeholders to assist FDA in its consideration of this issue, so we would appreciate your response within the next

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21 days, or as soon as possible. You may direct your response to my attention at 200 C. Street SW, Washington, D.C. 20204.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Louis Carson, 202-260-3740. Thank you again for your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely yours,



Joseph A. Levitt
Director
Center for Food Safety
and Applied Nutrition

cc:

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