



# Getting their teeth into fluoride issue

By CRAIG BORLEY

THE 60% of New Zealanders already drinking fluoridated water without negative health effects were proof the additive would not harm Otago people, Otago District Health Board fluoride spokeswoman Dr Dorothy Boyd said on Saturday.

She was joined in her support for fluoridation by a collection of oral health professionals, including the University of Otago School of Dentistry dean Prof Greg Seymour, the Ministry of Health's chief oral health adviser Robin Whyman and New Zealand Dental Association executive director Dr David Crum.

The group were in Dunedin for the dental association's two-yearly conference, being held at the university and attended by about 500 people.

Dr Boyd said fluoride strengthened tooth enamel, affected bacteria and repaired early decay.

Recently published letters to the *Otago Daily Times* have highlighted public fears that the chemical would harm those drinking it.

Dr Boyd said whatever the public voted for when local body elections closed on October 13 would be respected.

However, it was important the negative messages were put into context.

"There certainly are people opposed to this issue. But they tend to be the people who speak the loudest. The concern is a dosage situation, and sometimes that is mischievously written to be alarmist."

She said the common painkiller paracetamol could also be dangerous in large amounts.

"But I'm confident, as a mum with two children, that this is safe and effective."

City water supplies in Dunedin, Invercargill, Wellington and parts of Auckland already contained fluoride, without causing negative side effects on those drinking the water, she said.



Healthy teeth team . . . Oral health professionals promote the fluoride message at Otago University on Saturday; from left, Hilary Strang, Dorothy Boyd, John Harris, Robin Whyman, David Garry, Craig Waterhouse, Greg Seymour and Robyn Jordan. PHOTO: GERAUD O'BRIEN

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