

PERE BICARDÍ, CHEMIST

“A breakthrough in health protection”

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Bicardí, Head of the plan against dental amalgams. Photo: LL.SERRAT

Eleven years ago you began a struggle to put an end to the use of mercury in dentistry in Catalonia as manager of the project "*Fora amalgama de mercuri - Phase out mercury dental amalgams*". What is the status of the project right now?

I am very happy that, with the collaboration of the departments of Health and Environment of the Generalitat [Government of Catalonia] and the Chemists and Dentists professional colleges in Catalonia, it has come to fruition. I finished my struggle with the satisfaction of being able to say that Catalonia is at the forefront of health protection in this area [within Spain]. No need now to reflect ourselves in Sweden! [www.elpuntavui.cat/noticia/article/2-societat/14-salut/128031-lens-hem-de-fixar-en-sueciar.html?dema=1]

What exactly has been achieved?

To reduce the use of mercury amalgam dental fillings. In 2005 the use of this toxic material was approximately 85% and currently we have a percentage of use very close to zero. Let's keep in mind that in the rest of the Spanish state the use of mercury dental amalgams is still quite high.

How has this goal been achieved?

Through awareness of dentists, who have not only stopped using mercury dental amalgams, but advise patients to, gradually, substitute them with less toxic dental fillings. We can say that we have also received support by primary health care centers (CAP) and the complicity of the wholesalers of pharmaceutical and medical devices.

Anyway, due to this economic crisis, it is complicated for people to replace their mercury dental amalgams. Don't you think so?

It is true. In this regard, I would ask the dental professionals to collaborate, to the extent they are able, to help their patients to take this step.

And what about mercury dental amalgams if a person who has amalgams dies and is cremated?

This was an important battle. But finally, in Barcelona, in the cemeteries of Monjuïc and Collserola, the authorities installed and implemented filters for mercury collection, in order to prevent the poisoning of this heavy metal in the soil, aquifers, sea and fish. These two facilities perform nearly 80% of cremation in Catalonia.

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