Author's response to reviews

Title: Mercury Concentrations in Fish Jerky Snack Food: Marlin, Ahi, and Salmon

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr. Grandjean;

Thank you for your thoughtful input and consideration of this manuscript. To answer your question on FDA and the desiccation or smoking of fish and mercury concentrations, I have yet to find a reference where the FDA has addressed this. I could only find references for fishmeal being discussed in the literature from many years ago. The fact that fishmeal could concentrate mercury, as discussed in my book, was what prompted me to test the jerky.

As to the FDA regulation: As you know, the FDA oversees commercial fish and “fisheries products,” which includes jerky, and limits the allowable mercury level to 1.0 µg/g. The EPA still maintains the 0.5 µg/g limit. The joint FDA/EPA consumption advisory only says “fish” and “shellfish.” I cannot find any consumption advisory that explicitly addresses dried fish or jerky in regard to methylmercury. As for the EPA’s current RfD, the FDA never adopted it. I will try to clarify more in the manuscript.

I realize I could be more explicit in the manuscript of what all the numbers mean for one’s health. I would rather leave it open for discussion…this paper will hopefully open up much dialogue.

The revisions are as follows:

1. Title change. “level” is replaced by “concentration.”
2. Concentration will replace “level” where appropriate. The term “level” is used frequently in FDA reports, so it is difficult to know at times whether the change would be appropriate. Please advise if you feel other changes in regard to this need to be made.
3. The discussion section and results sections were revised. A “result” was removed from the discussion and placed in its proper place in the results section.
4. Comments on water content and concentration were made in both the results and discussion sections and are highlighted with track changes, as requested by reviewer.
5. Academic degrees were removed from the author list.
6. The EPA mercury limit for fish was added to the background section.
7. Comment as to mercury strongly being bound to tissues and no cooking methods known that can remove it were added to page 4.
8. How the marlin data compared to the EPA’s limit was added to the results section as requested by the reviewer.

9. Line numbering was removed.

10. Numbers used in counting were written out.

11. Metric units were added where appropriate.

12. Mu was used instead of mcg.

13. On title page the heading “title page” was removed.

14. The author instructions for the title page states: Provide the title of the article, the full authors’ names, the authors’ full institutional addresses and email addresses, and indicate the corresponding author.

   I am not sure what it is you want me to change on my title page. The final manuscripts available on your website do not have full addresses and are completely different from what the instructions ask for. Please advise.

15. In the abstract, the colons were removed and headings are now above the text.

16. Abbreviations, competing interests, and author’s contributions were moved to the end of the manuscript. And placed in the order.

17. Figure format. I removed the title from within the figure.

18. Minor formatting errors were corrected.

19. The figure was renamed to: Mercury Concentrations in Marlin Jerky. And is submitted as a separate file.

20. Minor typos were corrected.

21. References formatted as “justified.” Tabs were removed.

Thank you for your input and advice,

Sincerely,

Jane M. Hightower, MD