

22/08/2001

Silverfil, a new dental amalgam material, can allay mercury concerns

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VARIOUS quarters recently argued in the newspapers about mercury in dental amalgam. The issue of excess or unreacted mercury within dental amalgam made out of an alloy of silver-tin or copper is not unknown.

The amount of excess or unreacted mercury is so minute that the leading dental organisations of the world such as the American Dental Association (ADA), the Federation Dentaire Internationale (FDI), and the world Dental Federation, have all taken a common stand to endorse the continued use of the amalgam.

The FDI has taken a stand with regards to its Policy Statement on Dental Amalgam, stating: "... to date there is no direct filling material available that can fully replace amalgam".

Silverfil, which is a new dental amalgam material, was launched on April 12 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The official launch was also attended by the Minister of Health and the president of the Malaysian Dental Association and president-elect of the FDI 2001.

Silverfil is the first of its kind in the world and it does not have any tin or copper. Amalgam made from Silverfil has been tested by City University, London, and the Institute of Advanced Studies, University Malaya, and both their reports confirm that: "... there is no evidence of any free mercury" within amalgams made from Silverfil within the recommended mixing ratio.

Silverfil has been clinically evaluated on its useability in Malaysia for more than five years at a government dental clinic, the Children's Department of the Dental Faculty, University Malaya, and the Defence Ministry's dental clinic.

All participants favourably concluded that Silverfil can be used as a suitable amalgam filling material.

Today, Silverfil is already being used in several government dental clinics, the Armed Forces dental clinics, dental faculty of a university in Malaysia as well as private dental clinics. Overseas markets are being developed.

Hopefully, in due time, the international dental organisations will understand the benefits of Silverfil and when that happens, the dilemma about excess or free mercury in dental amalgams will be put to rest once and for all.