How does the Ramazzini Institute see the EFSA verdict that a daily intake of 40mg/Kg body weight should stay as the safety limit?

"We are very concerned about the consequences of this decision to public health, though not exactly surprised. We stick to our conviction that aspartame is carcinogenic to man, since our experimental model has proved it a carcinogen for two animal species, the rat and the mouse, and for various target organs. That is also the criterion adopted by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of the World Health Organization (WHO) in classifying carcinogenic substances. We have observed not only an increase in lymphomas and leukaemias in the female, but a statistically significant increase in solid tumours such as malignant tumours of the peripheral nerves, above all of the cranium, and tumours of the renal pelvis in rats, as well as liver tumours in mice.

The EFSA has failed to reckon, not just with our results, but other important epidemiological studies, one of which includes 122,000 people and highlights how use of aspartame entails an increased incidence of lymphomas and leukaemias (Schernhammer et al. 2012), exactly as we observed in experimental animals. Another Argentinian study, likewise ignored by EFSA, showed that aspartame increases tumours of the urinary tract, which we again noticed in experimental animals treated with aspartame (Andreatta et al. 2008).

Recently a group of researchers from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA/USA) gave a highly favourable rating to our experimental model, methods and studies (Gift et al. 2013), concluding that they may be used for risk-assessment purposes in the American system.

For our part, we intend to counter EFSA by a major scientific approach worthy of a social cooperative as we are, i.e. working towards the truth. As partners in our project we have NIEHS/USA; together we wish to eliminate all uncertainty over our data. Our three experiments on aspartame – two on rats and one on mice – will be reassessed from a statistical viewpoint; we will then proceed to characterise the lesions classified as pulmonary lymphomas (the only kind over which controversy has arisen); finally in 2015 we will call an International Pathology Working Group to review all the malignant tumours we diagnosed in the three experiments.

Whatever the outcome, ours will be a scientific response to a scientific issue, eschewing committees of experts. More than likely, the whole process will cost less than EFSA's experts."

Fiorella Belpoggi

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