

ASPARTAME REACTIONS: A HIDDEN EPIDEMIC

Aspartame has been linked to a host of devastating central nervous system disorders

When aspartame was approved for use, Dr HJ Roberts, director of the Palm Beach Institute for Medical Research, had no reason to doubt the FDA's decision. 'But my attitude changed,' he says, 'after repeatedly encountering serious reactions in my patients that seemed justifiably linked to aspartame.' Twenty years on, Roberts has coined the phrase 'aspartame disease' to describe the wide range of adverse effects he has seen among aspartame-guzzling patients.

He estimates: 'Hundreds of thousands of consumers, more likely millions, currently suffer major reactions to products containing aspartame. Today, every physician probably encounters aspartame disease in everyday practice, especially among patients with illnesses that are undiagnosed or difficult to treat.'

As a guide for other doctors, Roberts, a recognised expert in difficult diagnoses, has published a lengthy series of case studies, *Aspartame Disease: an ignored epidemic* (Sunshine Sentinel Press), in which he meticulously details his treatment of 1,200 aspartame-sensitive individuals, or 'reactors', encountered in his own practice. Following accepted medical procedure for detecting sensitivities to foods, Roberts had his patients remove aspartame from their diets. With nearly two thirds of reactors, symptoms began to improve within days of removing aspartame, and improvements were maintained as long as aspartame was kept out of their diet.

Roberts' case studies parallel much of what was revealed in the FDA's report on adverse reactions to aspartame – that toxicity often reveals itself through central nervous system disorders and compromised immunity. His casework shows that aspartame toxicity can mimic the symptoms of and/or worsen several diseases that fall into these broad categories (see the box above).

Case studies, especially a large series like this, address some of the issues surrounding real-world use in a way that laboratory studies

CONDITIONS MIMICKED BY ASPARTAME TOXICITY

- multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's disease
- Alzheimer's disease
- fibromyalgia
- arthritis
- multiple chemical sensitivity
- chronic fatigue syndrome
- attention deficit disorder
- panic disorder
- depression and other psychological disorders
- lupus
- diabetes and diabetic complications
- birth defects
- lymphoma
- Lyme disease
- hypothyroidism

never can; and the conclusions that can be drawn from such observations aren't just startling, they are also potentially highly significant. In fact, Roberts believes that one of the major problems with aspartame research has been the continued over-emphasis on laboratory studies. This has meant that the input of concerned independent physicians and other interested persons, especially consumers, is 'reflexively discounted as "anecdotal".'

Many of the diseases listed by Roberts fall into the category of medicine's 'mystery diseases' – conditions with no clear aetiology and few effective cures. And while no one is suggesting that aspartame is the single cause of such diseases, Roberts' research suggests that some people diagnosed with, for example, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's or chronic fatigue syndrome may end up on a regimen of potentially harmful drugs that could have been avoided if they simply stopped ingesting aspartame-laced products.

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