

Steve Waldman
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April 22, 2024

Representative Anna Paulina Luna
1017 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Re: Ending cavities as we know them

Dear Representative Luna,

Decades ago, a University of Florida professor of dentistry, Jeffrey Hillman, developed a promising approach to reducing or perhaps even eliminating dental cavities.

We all learn as young children that cavities are caused by germs. We've learned more recently that there are good germs and bad germs, and now many of us take probiotics or sip kombucha to encourage good germs. Hillman developed a good germ. It is a variant of the germs that normally cause tooth decay by converting sugar into the acid that corrodes our teeth. Hillman's germ does not secrete acid at all, and so is harmless. Once it replaces the bad germs in our mouths, the process that turns sugar to acid to tooth decay would be stopped before it even starts.

Hillman once sought to commercialize his invention, but the clinical trials process can be daunting. Perhaps the FDA is to blame. Perhaps proving this sort of intervention to be safe and effective is just inherently hard. In any case, Hillman's invention is now beyond patent protection, so no private firm is likely to bear the risk and expense of conducting clinical trials on it now.

That could be great news for the American people. Patent protection creates wonderful incentives for drug development, but often leaves the public stuck with stratospheric, even extortionate, drug prices. When there is a very promising, off-patent treatment like this one, the right thing to do is for the Federal government to finance the clinical trials that are required to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the treatment. Once we know that it works and it's safe, there will be great opportunities for US companies to compete to provide the best formulation.

As a parent, it has been heartbreaking to watch my son suffer through fillings and crowns, however diligently he brushes his teeth. It has also cost a small fortune. Tooth decay may not be the great political controversy of the day, but helping end it would be a tremendous benefit to all of us.

As my representative in Congress, I call on you to take a leading role in procuring funding for clinical trials and taming the Federal bureaucracy to ensure that this treatment, if it would in fact be safe and effective, becomes available to us all.

Your constituent,

Steve Waldman

P.S. You can learn more at the following links:

- <https://x.com/yishan/status/1780131552615420189>



- <https://www.astralcodexten.com/p/defying-cavity-lantern-bioworks-faq>

