Listening to the Science on BPA with FDA

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If you've had the time to read something other than the latest COVID-19 news, you may have noticed a recent story about the claimed presence of low levels of perfluoroalkyl chemicals in certain kinds of food containers. The story is based on a recent report from an environmental group on this topic.

The story includes several quotes from a former U.S. government employee. Although off topic for the article, one of the quotes refers to a reason why the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) "banned" BPA, a chemical unrelated to the perfluoroalkyl chemicals discussed in the article, from baby bottles and sippy cups. This might somehow be relevant for the article had FDA actually "banned" BPA from any products. Except the agency hasn't done so, and the quote is inaccurate.

As of 2011, it was apparent that BPA-based plastics were no longer used for baby bottles or sippy cups. For this reason, FDA announced in a Federal Register notice dated February 17, 2012, its plan to remove the regulation that allowed BPA-based plastics from these uses. The FDA didn't ban anything, in particular based on safety, but simply removed an unnecessary regulation. As stated by FDA in its planned action to remove the regulation, the action "*is not based on safety, but is based on the fact that regulatory authorization is no longer necessary for the use of that food additive.*"

Later that year, the action was completed and announced in a Federal Register notice dated July 17, 2012. Along with removing the regulation, the notice repeated the same statement to explain that the action was not based on safety but the regulation simply wasn't necessary any longer.

While this may be old news, it gets quite a bit more interesting with FDA and BPA. Around the same time that this regulatory action was taking place, FDA started work on a comprehensive research program to further evaluate the safety of BPA. Related studies on BPA have also been conducted by NTP, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

All of these studies, about 30 studies in total, are now complete and have been published. From these studies collectively, we can be confident that:

- Consumer exposure to BPA is extremely low;
- BPA is rapidly eliminated from the body after exposure; and
- There is no risk of health effects at typical consumer exposure levels.

Based on these studies, in particular the ones conducted by FDA itself, FDA addresses the safety of BPA in a very straightforward way on its website: I*s BPA Safe? Yes. Based on FDA's ongoing safety review of scientific evidence, the available information continues to support the safety of BPA for the currently approved uses in food containers and packaging.*