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Is Water a drug medicine?

*Jean-Louis Chaussade, Gérard Friedlander, Monique Romon
Moderator: Guy Vallancien*

1. Water, a factor in death and inequality

Before becoming a factor in health, for centuries and millennia water has been a vector for death and the vehicle of major epidemics. Today, lack of access to drinking water is still a major factor in health inequality. Too many children are still dying from drinking poor-quality water.

Water is also a factor in social inequality. Within disadvantaged social classes, drinking sugary drinks can give the impression of access to the consumer society. However, excessive consumption is a key factor in childhood obesity. This is also a marker for social inequalities.

2. Water, a means of prevention or a real medicine?

In 2003, 13,000 elderly people died of dehydration during the heatwave in France. So does this make water a medicine? When a person is suffering from a urinary infection, the first advice from the doctor is to drink a lot. In this context, water is not so much a medicine as a means of prevention.

As with any medicine, under-dosing is harmful, while over-dosing can be deleterious. For example, for people with a modest food intake and slightly deficient renal function, consuming too much water can lead to complications.

Tobacco consumption encourages the development of bladder cancer. To prevent this pathology, people must dilute the active substances by urinating frequently. To do so, they must drink often and a lot. Drinking a lot of water can also greatly reduce chronic renal pathologies. In the case in point, water constitutes a real medicine.

3. The issue of fresh water reserves in tomorrow's world

The fresh water reserves available on the planet remain constant. In 150 years' time, with a population of 9 billion inhabitants, the reserve available per inhabitant could theoretically go from 15,000 to 3,000m³. Below 1,000m³ per inhabitant will place the Earth in a situation of water stress. In addition to these average values, it is necessary to observe that water is very poorly distributed around the surface of the globe. In decades to come, societies will need to pay serious attention to water usage.

At the current time, 75% of water is used in agriculture. Industry consumes between 15 and 20%. Human consumption represents 5% of the total. In other words, a world with 9 billion inhabitants will not be able to adopt a way of life based on high meat consumption. Since it takes 10,000 litres of water to produce one kilo of meat. In everyday life, lots can be done to reduce water consumption. Moreover, in France, this consumption is decreasing by 1% each year, without the need for restrictions.

In this context, alternative fresh water production techniques will be fundamental. Desalination techniques are improving, but must only be considered with sensible energy consumption.

On the whole, the way in which water production and consumption is considered must be rethought and move away from the concepts of the 20th century. The inequalities of the 20th century cannot continue in the 21st century.