

## Part I

# The POISONS in our food chain

may have caused cancer in rats and the US Food and Drug Agency (FDA) did not approve its use in food for many years. Further testing did not answer why the brain cancer developed in the rats, and the debate raged on until some familiar names entered the scene.

One Donald Rumsfeld became Searle's CEO and Ronald Reagan became US President, and he appointed Arthur Hull Hayes FDA commissioner, who approved Aspartame in the dry goods food category. In 1985 Monsanto bought G.D.Searle and the Aspartame business became a separate subsidiary; the NutraSweet Company. I would love to tell you that it is not about money

Phenylketonuria. It is also known that Aspartame can spike blood plasma levels of phenylalanine, as it is absorbed much faster than naturally occurring phenylalanine containing proteins. This has caused further debate into whether Aspartame ingestion by pregnant mothers can harm the safe development of neurotransmitters in the brains of fetuses. Similarly the 40% of Aspartame broken down into Aspartic Acid also causes large spikes in the level of the acid in blood plasma and these can act as excitotoxins which can inflict brain and nerve cell damage by crossing the blood/brain barrier. Again there is scientific debate over whether humans are as susceptible

# Mad, Bad and dangerous to eat...

By Sudha Hamilton

**a**spartame is the technical name for the main ingredient in many artificial non-sucrose sweeteners; including NutraSweet, Equal, Spoonful and Equal-Measure. It is also at the top of the list of chemical baddies that are still being approved by government agencies for use in our food. You will also find Aspartame commonly used in soft drinks, pharmaceutical products and over the counter cough lollies and syrups. It is said to be an ingredient in over six thousand items of consumer foods/drinks. It is a compound of aspartic acid, phenylalanine (a free amino acid isolate) and methanol (wood alcohol). This combination is subsequently responsible for some very serious negative activity in our bodies, including nerve cell necrosis (death) which can lead to organ system disease and also contributes to dangerous toxic interactions with other pharmaceutical drugs. Aspartame crosses the blood/brain barrier and damages brain tissue and causes lesions on the brain, where the dead cells once were. It also affects the autonomic nerve system located down the spine and the junction system of the heart. It is quite simply a neurotoxin.

How, why and when did Aspartame become approved for human consumption? It was discovered accidentally in 1965 by James Schlatter – a chemist working for the pharmaceutical company G.D. Searle & Co – and was found to be 180 times sweeter than sugar. Initial safety tests were inconclusive, as to whether Aspartame

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or that there was never a suspicion of corruption; but I cannot. In 1995, the FDA Epidemiology Branch Chief Thomas Wilcox reported that Aspartame complaints represented 75% of all reports of adverse reactions to substances in the food supply from 1981 to 1995.

The metabolic journey that Aspartame takes once ingested causes it to break down into several residual chemicals and further break down products include formaldehyde, formic acid and diketopiperazine. Exposures to very low levels of formaldehyde have been proven to cause chronic toxicity in humans. There has however been scientific disagreement regarding how the body deals with the methanol and formaldehyde produced by Aspartame, and this debate is one of the key reasons why Aspartame has not been reviewed and subsequently banned by regulatory government bodies in the western world.

The phenylalanine component of Aspartame, which is one of the nine essential fatty acids, makes up around 50% of Aspartame's mass and this is highly unsafe for those with the rare genetic condition known as

to this extensive brain damage as are the rats, for which the research shows conclusive proof. Further concerns regarding Diketopiperazine, which is created in products as Aspartame breaks down over time, can through nitrosation in the body create a chemical which can cause brain tumors.

So we are left with a situation of scientific disagreement paralysing regulatory bodies, and lots and lots of health complaints, ranging from the small, to claims involving hundreds of thousands of possible deaths. A recent survey of 166 studies into the safety of Aspartame found that 74 of them had NutraSweet related funding and that they all found that Aspartame was safe. Whereas of the 92 independently funded studies, only 8% of them found that Aspartame did not have safety concerns in humans to answer to. Science may not be as clean and trustworthy as those white lab jackets that so many scientists are fond of wearing might indicate to us. After all, if you ask the right questions in any scientific study you can pretty much get any answer you are after. Omission is as much of a cause of death as anything else.