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December 9, 2014

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The Collegian / Collegiannews.com

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Dear Ms. Lilywala,

I read with interest Sabrina Jamil's story, "[What's the harm in bottled water?](#)" published November 19, 2014, on [www.collegiannews.com](http://www.collegiannews.com) and am writing to draw your attention to numerous factual errors in this article.

It is unfortunate that Ms. Jamil did not contact the International Bottled Water Association (IBWA), as it would have helped her provide a more accurate article about the safety of bottled water.

Specifically, Ms. Jamil makes numerous statements that are factually incorrect.

***"Bottled water is not required to be tested"***

Bottled water is comprehensively regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which requires testing and monitoring throughout the sourcing and bottling process and up until the water is sealed in containers. On a gallon-for-gallon basis, bottled water is tested up to 30 times more frequently than tap water for nearly all of the same contaminants.

With regard to daily testing, there are subtle differences between testing at a bottled water plant and a public water system (PWS) treatment plant. Bottled water facilities use waters from protected underground sources such as springs or artesian aquifers as well as from public water systems.

It should be noted that both bottled water and PWS plants test more frequently than the minimum number of samples required each month by respective FDA and EPA regulations, often on an hourly basis.

***“Bottled water contains toxic chemicals”***

This is false and misleading statement with no basis in fact. Single serve bottled water is packaged in PET (polyethylene terephthalate) plastic. PET plastic is used in a variety of packaging for many foods, including everything from peanut butter, soft drinks, and juices to beer, wine, and spirits. PET plastic is approved as safe for food and beverage contact by the FDA and similar regulatory agencies throughout the world, and has been for over 30 years.

***“Bottled water expires”***

Bottled water does not expire. The FDA, which regulates bottled water as a packaged food product, has determined that there is no limit to the shelf life of bottled water.

Because it is packaged under sanitary, good manufacturing processes; is in a sanitary sealed container; and does not contain substances (such as sugars and proteins) typically associated with food spoilage, bottled water can be stored for extended periods of time without concerns. Some companies place date-based lot codes on bottled water containers, which are typically used to assist in managing stock rotation at distribution and retail points.

***“80 % of bottles go in the ocean”***

All bottled water containers are 100 % recyclable. A study from the National Association for PET Container Resources (NAPCOR) shows PET plastic bottled water containers are the single most recycled item in nationwide curbside collection programs. In addition, the national recycling rate for single-serve PET plastic bottled water containers is now 38.04 %; a figure that has more than doubled in the last eight years, says NAPCOR. The majority of the remaining non-recycled bottles are inappropriately discarded as general waste, the vast majority of which goes to landfills or is incinerated, not dumped in the ocean. Our industry strongly supports efforts to increase recycling rates of all plastics.

In addition, of all the plastics produced in the United States, PET plastic bottled water packaging makes up only 0.91 percent; less than one percent. Three- and five-gallon plastic bottled water containers are reused between 30-50 times before being recycled.

***“100 billion dollars are spent on bottled water a year in the U.S.”***

This figure is wholly inaccurate and appears to indicate a lack of basic industry research. The entire U.S. bottled water market was \$13 billion in 2014 (wholesale). Even if you assume 100% markup by retailers, the amount would be \$26 billion, not \$100 billion.

***“Cancer.org says increased temperatures lead to deterioration of plastic bottles”***

This website actually [says the opposite](#). Quoting the cancer.org website regarding these types of claims, often circulated in emails or on social media:

*“These emails are apparently based on a student’s college thesis. In fact, DEHA is not inherent in the plastic used to make these bottles, and even if it was, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says DEHA “cannot reasonably be anticipated to cause cancer, teratogenic effects, immunotoxicity, neurotoxicity, gene mutations, liver, kidney, reproductive, or developmental*

*toxicity or other serious or irreversible chronic health effects." Meanwhile, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), says DEHA "is not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans."*

***"Bottled water increases spending"***

Bottled water competes with other packaged drinks, not tap water. In fact, most bottled water drinkers also drink tap water.

As a popular retail food product, bottled water is available at many differing price points. When alluding to differences in cost between tap and bottled water, opponents typically cite retail prices from convenience or drug stores, where bottled water prices are typically higher.

According to BMC, the average wholesale price per gallon of domestic non-sparkling bottled water was \$1.21 in 2013. BMC also notes that research shows consumers most often tend to buy bottled water in bulk from supermarkets or large discount retailers as they often prefer to purchase bottled water in cost-saving volume.

***"Bottled water impacts our environment"***

The amount of water and energy used to produce bottled water products in North America is less than all other types of packaged beverages. On average, 1.32 liters of water (including the liter of water consumed) and 0.24 mega joules of energy are used to produce one liter of finished bottled water. And its packaging is 100% recyclable.

The bottled water industry is a strong supporter of our environment and our natural resources. A life cycle assessment conducted by Quantis in 2010 shows bottled water's environmental footprint is the lowest of any packaged beverage. Key findings of this study show that water is the least environmentally impactful beverage option and that bottled water is the most environmentally responsible packaged drink choice.

According to BMC, between 2000 and 2011, the average weight of a 16.9-ounce PET plastic bottle has declined 47.7% to 9.89 grams, saving 3.3 billion pounds of PET resin since 2000. And, many bottled water companies are already using recycled plastic in their bottles and some are producing 100% recycled PET water bottles.

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We do agree with your statement that bottled water is convenient. In fact, bottled water's very convenience helps people choose water instead of less-healthy drinks.

Bottled water is the healthiest beverage on the shelf and one of the simplest changes a person can make is to switch to drinking water instead of other beverages that are heavy with sugar and calories. While simple, making water your beverage of choice is also impactful to your overall health and lifestyle choices. In fact, a November 2013 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report, [Obesity — United States, 1999–2010](#), finds that, while increases in

obesity prevalence have slowed or even stopped in recent years for some groups, it is still a pressing concern for the U.S. population as whole.

It is not in the best interest of your readers to discourage consumption of this safe, healthy, convenient product.

I respectfully request that Ms. Jamil's article be updated to reflect the facts mentioned above, as the article as it currently appears, seriously misinforms consumers about the safety and quality of bottled water.

I am happy to discuss these or any other bottled water issues, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

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