

Fukushima: “An Ongoing Global Radiological Catastrophe”. “A Huge Coverup”. Dr. Helen Caldicott

Transcript of 8th anniversary interview with Dr. Helen Caldicott

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The eight year anniversary of the triple meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear facility passed mostly without comment in mainstream media circles. In spite of ongoing radiological contamination that will continue to spread and threaten human health for lifetimes to come, other stories dominate the international news cycle. The climate change conundrum, serious though it may be, seemingly crowds out all other clear and present environmental hazards.

As part of efforts to normalize this historic event and cover it up in its magnitude, the Japanese government has invested considerable financial, public relations and other resources into what they are billing the ‘[Recovery Olympics](#)’ set to take place in a year’s time in Tokyo.

But Helen Caldicott warns that the dangers associated with Fukushima have not gone away and remain a cause for concern.



Dr. Helen Caldicott has been an author, physician and one of the world’s leading anti-nuclear campaigners. She helped to reinvigorate the group of Physicians for Social Responsibility, acting as president from 1978 to 1983. Since its founding in 2001 she served as president of the US based Nuclear Policy Research Institute later called Beyond Nuclear which initiates symposia and educational projects aimed at informing the public about the dangers of nuclear power, nuclear weapons, and nuclear war. And she is the editor of the 2014 book, [Crisis Without End: The Medical and Ecological Consequences of the Fukushima Nuclear Catastrophe](#).

On the week marking the eighth anniversary of the Fukushima meltdowns, the [Global Research News Hour radio program](#), hosted by Michael Welch, reached out to Dr. Caldicott to get her expert opinion on the health dangers posed by the most serious nuclear disaster since, at least, the 1986 Chernobyl event.

Global Research: Now the Japanese government is preparing to welcome visitors to Japan for the 2020 Olympic Games, and coverage of the 8th anniversary of the Fukushima disaster is hardly, it seems to me, registered given the significant radiological and other dangers that you cited and your authors cited in your 2014 book, *Crisis Without End*. Now it's been more than four years since that book came out. I was hoping you could update our listenership on what is currently being recognized as the main health threats in 2019, perhaps not registered in the book, that you're currently looking at in relation to the Fukushima meltdown.

Helen Caldicott: Well it's difficult because the Japanese government has authorized really only examination of thyroid cancer. Now thyroid cancer is caused by radioactive iodine and there were many, many cases of that after Chernobyl. And already, they've looked at children under the age of 18 in the Fukushima prefecture at the time of the accident, and ... how many children... 100...no 201 by June 18 last year... 201 had developed thyroid cancer. Some cancers had metastasized. The incidence of thyroid cancer in that population normally is 1 per million. So obviously it's an epidemic of thyroid cancer and it's just starting now.

What people need to understand is the latent period of carcinogenesis, ie the time after exposure to radiation when cancers develop is any time from 3 years to 80 years. And so it's a very, very long period. Thyroid cancers appear early. Leukemia appears about 5 to 10 years later. They're not looking for leukemia. Solid cancers of every organ, or any organ as such appear about 15 years later and continue and in fact the Hibakusha from the Hiroshima and Nagasaki who are still alive are still developing cancers in higher than normal numbers.

The Japanese government has told doctors that they are not to talk to their patients about radiation and illnesses derived thereof, and in fact if the doctors do do that, they might lose their funding from the government. The IAEA, the International Atomic Energy Agency interestingly set up a hospital – a cancer hospital – in Fukushima along with the Fukushima University for people with cancer, which tells you everything.

So there's a huge, huge cover up. I have been to Japan twice and particularly to Fukushima and spoken to people there and the parents are desperate to hear the truth even if it's not good truth. And they thanked me for telling them the truth. So it's an absolute medical catastrophe I would say, and a total cover up to protect the nuclear industry and all its ramifications.

GR: Now, are we talking about some of the, the contamination that happened 8 years ago or are we talking about ongoing emissions from, for example–

HC: Well there are ongoing emissions into the air consistently, number one. Number two, a huge amount of water is being stored –over a million gallons in tanks at the site. That water is being siphoned off from the reactor cores, the damaged melted cores. Water is pumped consistently every day, every hour, to keep the cores cool in case they have another melt. And that water, of course, is extremely contaminated.

Now they say they've filtered out the contaminants except for the tritium which is part of the water molecule, but they haven't. There's strontium, cesium, and many other elements in that water – it's highly radioactive – and because there isn't enough room to build more tanks, they're talking about emptying all that water into the Pacific Ocean and the fishermen are very, very upset. The fish already being caught off Fukushima, some are obviously contaminated. But this will be a disaster.

Water comes down from the mountains behind the reactors, flows underneath the reactors into the sea and always has. And when the reactors were in good shape, the water was fine, didn't get contaminated. But now the three molten cores in contact with that water flowing under the reactors and so the water flowing into the Pacific is very radioactive and that's a separate thing from the million gallons or more in those tanks.

They put up a refrigerated wall of frozen dirt around the reactors to prevent that water from the mountains flowing underneath the reactors, which has cut down the amount of water flowing per day from 500 tons to about a hundred and fifty. But of course, if they lose electricity, that refrigeration system is going to fail, and it's a transient thing anyway so it's ridiculous. In terms... So over time the Pacific is going to become more and more radioactive.

They talk about decommissioning and removing those molten cores. When robots go in and try and have a look at them, their wiring just melts and disappears. They're extraordinarily radioactive. No human can go near them because they would die within 48 hours from the radiation exposure. They will never, and I quote never, decommission those reactors. They will never be able to stop the water coming down from the mountains. And so, the truth be known, it's an ongoing global radiological catastrophe which no one really is addressing in full.

GR: Do we have a better reading on, for example the thyroids, but also leukemia incubation—

HC: No they're not looking—well, leukemia they're not looking for leukemia...

GR: Just thyroid

HC: They're not charting it. So the only cancer they're looking at is thyroid cancer and that's really high, and you know it's at 201 have already been diagnosed and some have metastasized. And a very tight lid is being kept on any other sort of radiation related illnesses and leukemia and the like. All the other cancers and the like, and leukemia is so... It's not just a catastrophe it's a...

GR: ...a cover up

HC: Yeah. I can't really explain how I feel medically about it. It's just hideous.

GR: Well I have a brother who's a physician, who was pointing to well we should maybe, the World Health Organization is a fairly authoritative body of research for all of the indicators and epidemiological aspects of this, but you seem to suggest the World Health Organization may not be that reliable in light of the fact that they are partnered with the IAEA. Is that my understanding...?

HC: Correct. They signed a document, I think in '59, with the IAEA that they would not report

any medical effects of radiological disasters and they've stuck to that. So they are in effect in this area part of the International Atomic Energy Agency whose mission is to promote nuclear power. So don't even think about the WHO. it's really obscene.

GR: So what would... the incentive would be simply that they got funding?

HC: I don't know. I really don't know but they sold themselves to the devil.

GR: That's pretty incredible. So there's also the issue of biomagnification in the oceans, where you have radioactive debris, hundreds of tons of this radioactive water getting into the oceans and biomagnifying up through the food chain, so these radioactive particles can get inside our bodies. Could you speak to what you anticipate to see, what you would anticipate, whether it's recorded by World Health authorities or not, what we could expect to see in the years ahead in terms of the illnesses that manifest themselves?

HC: Well number one, Fukushima is a very agricultural prefecture. Beautiful, beautiful peaches, beautiful food, and lots of rice. And the radiation spread far and wide through the Fukushima prefecture, and indeed they have been plowing up millions and millions of tons of radioactive dirt and storing it in plastic bags all over the prefecture. The mountains are highly radioactive and every time it rains, down comes radiation with the water. So the radiation – the elements. And there are over 200 radioactive elements made in a nuclear reactor. Some have lives of seconds and some have lives of millions of years or lasts for millions of years will I say. So there are many many isotopes, long-lasting isotopes – cesium, strontium, tritium is another one – but many, many on the soil in Fukushima.

And what happens is – you talked about biomagnification – when the plants take up the water from the soil, they take up the cesium which is a potassium analog – it resembles potassium. Strontium 90 resembles calcium and the like. And these elements get magnified by orders of magnitude in the rice and in the plants. And so when you eat food that is grown in Fukushima, the chances are it's going to be relatively radioactive.

They've been diluting radioactive rice with non-radioactive rice to make it seem a bit better. Now, into the ocean go these isotopes as well, and the algae bio-magnify them by – you know -ten to a hundred times or more. And then the crustaceans eat the algae, bio-magnify it more. The little fish eat the crustaceans, the big fish eat the little fish and the like. And tuna found in – off the coast of California some years ago contained isotopes from Fukushima. Also fish, being caught on the west coast of California contained some of these isotopes. So, it's an ongoing bio-magnification catastrophe.

And the thing is that you can't even taste, smell or see radioactive elements in your food. They're invisible. And it takes a long time for cancers to occur. And you can't identify a particular cancer caused by a particular substance or isotope. You can only identify that problem by doing epidemiological studies comparing irradiated people with non-irradiated people to see what the cancer levels are and that data comes from Hiroshima and Nagasaki and many, many, many other studies.

GR: Chernobyl as well, no?

HC: Oh, Chernobyl! Well, a wonderful book was produced by the, uh, Russians, and published by the New York Academy of Sciences, called Chernobyl with over 5000 on the ground studies of children and diseases in Belarus and the Ukraine, and all over Europe. And

by now over a million people have already died from the Chernobyl disaster. And many diseases have been caused by that, including premature aging in children, microcephaly in babies, very small heads, diabetes, leukemia, I mean, I could go on and on.

Um, and those diseases which have been very well described in that wonderful book, um, which everyone should read, are not being addressed or identified or looked for in the Fukushima or Japanese population.

May I say that parts of Tokyo are extremely radioactive. People have been measuring the dirt from rooves of apartments, from the roadway, from vacuum cleaner dust. And some of these samples, they're so radioactive that they would classify to be buried in radioactive waste facilities in America. So, that's number one.

Number two, to have the Olympics in Fukushima just defies imagination. And uh, some of the areas where the athletes are going to be running, the dust and dirt there has been measured, and it's highly radioactive. So, this is Abe, the Prime Minister of Japan, who set this up to – as a sort of way to obscure what Fukushima really means. And those young athletes, you know, who are – and young people are much more sensitive to radiation, developing cancers later than older people – it's just a catastrophe waiting to happen.

GR: Dr. Caldicott...

HC: They're calling it the radioactive Olympics!

GR: (Chuckle). Is there anything that people can do, you know, whether they live in Japan or, say, the west coast of North America to mitigate the effects that this disaster has had, and may still be having eight years later?

HC: Yes. Do not eat any Japanese food because you don't know where it's sourced. Do not eat fish from Japan, miso, rice, you name it. Do not eat Japanese food. Period. Um, fish caught off the west coast of Canada and America, well, they're not testing the fish so I don't know what you'd do. Um, I mean, most of it's probably not radioactive but you don't know because you can't taste it.

Um they've closed down the air-borne radioactive measuring instruments off the west coast of America, uh, but that's pretty bad, because there still could be another huge accident at those reactors.

For instance, if there's another large earthquake, number one, all those tanks would be destroyed and the water would pour into the Pacific. Number two, there could be another meltdown, a release – huge release of radiation, um, from the damaged reactors. So, things are very tenuous, but they're not just tenuous now. They're going to be tenuous forever.

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