

Obtained by FOIA. Some typos from Optical Character Recognition.

FACHEP and the battle over bacteria

The conflict between Edwards and Smith revolved mainly around DBPs, but there was another type of contaminant lurking in the background, **one that also offered some hope of explaining unexplained illnesses and impeding the rush to declare the crisis over: bacteria.**

.....**But what really began to arouse activists' sympathies was their burgeoning realization that FACHEP's message about the safety of the water was going to be different from that of Edwards.**

....**In November, he made his claim about filtered water being as good as, if not better than, bottled water!**⁴ The thrust of these remarks seemed to be that the science of the water was settled (for Edwards had settled it), implying that any further research was superfluous and any suggestion of lingering risks irresponsible.

In the lead up to our first community meeting in mid-December 2016, at which we planned to roll out our preliminary findings directly to residents, Smith called me almost daily as he tried to feel out whether he could safely get behind FACHEP. Because the team would not {indeed could not, by the terms of our contract) share non-public data with him, declaring his support for FACHEP was a bit of a gamble, premised largely on his perception of my trustworthiness. Nevertheless, it was a gamble he decided to take, and he began the delicate process of convincing his allies, particularly Melissa Mays and the plumbers, to attend our meeting with open minds.

They did indeed attend, but when they arrived skepticism was etched so deeply into their faces that I could tell we would have our work cut out for us winning them over. As soon as the scientists on the team began to speak, Mays began furiously scribbling away (I figured she was planning some sort of retort). But gradually, as I darted around the room from her to the plumbers to the tables full of other activists (for a good number of them had turned out), emphasizing the takeaway points, her demeanor softened. **Our message was moderate and full of caveats, but at least we were not proclaiming the water "safe" and were expressing an ongoing commitment to look further into the concerns we had identified.**

"It was nice to hear that things aren't all better," Mays told the press afterwards, "because that's what we're used to hearing- that things are better, that things are all fine."⁸⁵ From that point on, she and many of the other activists began to cite the work of "Wayne State": (for this was the name by which the team was popularly known) alongside the work of Smith as having revealed inconvenient truths about the water. Smith, for his part, decided that FACHEP's findings- as relayed at the meeting- resoundingly confirmed his own. He threw his symbolic support behind the team and praised our work effusively on social media.

....**The idea that Flint water might still be microbiologically compromised, a possibility that FACHEP continued to take seriously, entailed the no-longer-allowable assumption that there was still something *abnormal* about the water situation in Flint.** Edwards also began to stress that filter use was common around the country, as if the elective use of filter technology by an average filter-using household raised the same considerations as a citywide, emergency deployment- for political as well as public health reasons----Of a device that was largely unfamiliar to, and unwanted by, residents.⁹⁰ **Filter use in Flint was not, in other words, obviously comparable to filter use elsewhere.**