MACRO INTERNATIONAL, INC.

FOCUS GROUP ON

METHYL MERCURY

(FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION)

TUESDAY,

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8:00 P.M.

Moderator: Lynn Halverson

Denver, Colorado

Word-for-Word Reporters & Transcribers *** Nationwide/24-Hours
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MS. HALVERSON: I moderate for all kinds of clients all over the country. The past two days, we've been here in Denver talking with consumers about how to communicate information about health risks to consumers.

That's what we'll be talking about today, generally, and I'll get into more specifics later on. Because of the fact that I'm an independent moderator, I have no vested interest in any particular point of view, so I hope everybody's just open and honest about what they think about what we're talking about.

We don't have to come to any consensus. There are no right or wrong answers. If Steven says something, and Phyllis doesn't have the same view, I want to hear both views and why, so we can have a well rounded discussion here, and understand where people are coming from.

This is part of a larger research project, and I'm moderating groups all over, so what I like to do is concentrate on what you
folks have to say while we’re here. To do that, I don’t want to have to be
taking notes the whole time, so I’ve asked them
to tape this, and there’s a microphone in the
ceiling.

What that will require is for every
person to speak up just about as loudly as I am
now. Also, if you avoid side conversations with
your neighbor, that would be very helpful.

If that is going on, the tape picks
that up as well. It can’t discriminate between
what I want to hear and what I don’t want to
hear. A lot of times in a discussion, we’ll have
two, three people talking at the same time.

If that happens, I might have to play a
little traffic cop and take you one at a time,
because I want to make sure I capture what
everybody has to say when it’s on the tape.

I’m going to be using the tape to be
making a transcript of this group, and all it
will say is, the 8:00 p.m. group on October 17 in
Denver, Colorado.
I won't identify anybody by name, so feel free to speak your mind, and no specific names will be on the tape at all. One other thing that I wanted to let you know is that I have some people who are very interested in what you have to say, that are with me here tonight. They're in the room next door, so they'll be listening in to what we are talking about. Right before we're done, I'm going to run back there and see if there's anything that I should have asked you that I have forgotten to ask, or if there's something they would like clarified.

Those are our basic ground rules, before we get started. Anybody have any questions about the ground rules? All right, if not, why don't we find out who we have around the table. If you could just give me your first name, and tell me how long you've been in the Denver area.

A PARTICIPANT: My name is Bill. I've been in the Denver area since '82. I went to...
school in Gunnison, so I lived out there for another two years.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Where were you from originally?

A PARTICIPANT: Iowa.

MS. HALVERSON: All right.

A PARTICIPANT: I'm Susan. I've been in Denver all my life.

MS. HALVERSON: All right.

A PARTICIPANT: I'm Phyllis. I've been in Denver about 26 years.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. And where did you come from, Phyllis?

A PARTICIPANT: Florida.

MS. HALVERSON: All right.

A PARTICIPANT: I'm Susan. I've been here for about 25 years or so, originally from Pittsburgh.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Susan, if you could speak up a little more, a little loudly.

A PARTICIPANT: I have a bad throat thing, but I'll do my best.
MS. HALVERSON: Oh, sorry. Okay. In order to make sure we pick up everybody's voice on the tape. All right.

A PARTICIPANT: I'm Michael. I've been in Denver for about 35 years.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Great.

A PARTICIPANT: My name's Steve. I've been here about 29 years.

MS. HALVERSON: All right.

A PARTICIPANT: I'm Joanna, and I've been here about 15 years.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I'm Steven, and I've been here about 36 years.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I'm Donna, and I've been here since 1967.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: But I was born and raised in Colorado.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I'm Holly, and I've
only been here ten years.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

Well, I'm Lynn, and I've been here for two days, now. What we're going to be talking about today is conveying information about health risks.

Before we do that, I want do some introductory questions. First of all, regarding fish or seafood, how many of you eat fish or seafood as a regular part of your diet?

Almost everybody. Wow. Okay. About how often do you tend to eat it?

A PARTICIPANT: Once a week.

A PARTICIPANT: Once a week.

MS. HALVERSON: Once a week, maybe?

A PARTICIPANT: Once or twice.

MS. HALVERSON: Once or twice?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, once or twice.

MS. HALVERSON: Anyone else?

A PARTICIPANT: A couple times a month.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: About three times a
MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Just a couple times a month.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. When you eat fish, is it because you like it, or because you've heard it's good for you? What are the major reasons?

A PARTICIPANT: I like it.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I love it. I'm an avid fisherman, and I just --

MS. HALVERSON: So you catch your own?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah. And I buy the saltwater kinds.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Where do you catch it around here?

A PARTICIPANT: Steamboat, mostly.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. What kinds of fish are you catching?

A PARTICIPANT: Trout, cochine (sp), salmon.
MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Anyone else?

A PARTICIPANT: We do a lot of grilling, on the grill, and my husband does salmon, especially.

MS. HALVERSON: Um-hmm. Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: On the grill. It's really good. Fresh trout is my favorite, but we don't get that too often.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Anyone else?

Steve?

A PARTICIPANT: I like it. It's good for you.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Sort of a combination of both.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. What have you have heard about fish that's good for you?

A PARTICIPANT: The oils.

MS. HALVERSON: The oils?

A PARTICIPANT: It's supposed to be leaner, not as much fat.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.
A PARTICIPANT: Easier to digest.

MS. HALVERSON: Easier to digest than --

A PARTICIPANT: Then red meat.

MS. HALVERSON: All right. Anyone else? How about disadvantages of fish? What would be disadvantages, if any?

A PARTICIPANT: I think the freshness, that's a concern, and like what he has said, freshness, that made me think of when I was growing up, because we had it all the time.

Now you have to go buy it. We don't go fishing. I'm concerned about the freshness.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Let's talk a little bit about possible environmental contaminants that could get into the air that we breathe, or the water that we drink, or the foods that we eat.

When you think about contaminants, what kinds of things do you think about, either air, water, or food?

A PARTICIPANT: Mercury.
MS. HALVERSON: Mercury? Why do you say that?

A PARTICIPANT: It's been prevalent in papers.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: It's been talked about.

MS. HALVERSON: And lead?

A PARTICIPANT: Car pollution.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Chemicals, as far as the sprays. Pesticides, and such things as that.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Heavy metals and radiation.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Carbon monoxide in the air, the brown cloud around Denver.

MS. HALVERSON: I noticed that when I was flying in. Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: Pesticides.


When you think of pesticides as an environmental
contaminant, where do you think you, personally, 
would be most likely to come into contact with a 
contaminant like that?

A PARTICIPANT: Fruits and vegetables.
A PARTICIPANT: Fruits and vegetables.
A PARTICIPANT: Fruits and vegetables.
MS. HALVERSON: All right. How about 
lead?

A PARTICIPANT: Water.

MS. HALVERSON: Water? How does lead 
get into water?

A PARTICIPANT: Runoff.

MS. HALVERSON: Runoff?

A PARTICIPANT: Pipes.

MS. HALVERSON: Pipes?

A PARTICIPANT: Old pipes.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. How about 
mercury?

A PARTICIPANT: From fish.

MS. HALVERSON: From fish? Okay. What 
kinds of fish would tend to have mercury more 
than others? Any --
A PARTICIPANT: I would say ocean fish more than fresh water.

MS. HALVERSON: Why would that be?

A PARTICIPANT: Because that's where all the water runs to.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Northern New Mexico is pretty bad for it, too. The lakes and rivers.

MS. HALVERSON: And why does that occur, do you think?

A PARTICIPANT: Probably leaching from the ground, I would imagine, from the soils.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Runoff from industry.

There's not that much industry down there.

MS. HALVERSON: So how does mercury get into fish?

A PARTICIPANT: Digest it.

A PARTICIPANT: Digest it.

MS. HALVERSON: Digested? Holly, you said --

A PARTICIPANT: Digest it.
MS. HALVERSON: From?

A PARTICIPANT: The water.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: The foods that they eat.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. What kind of information do you, as a consumer, need to protect yourself from these kinds of exposures, like pesticides, and lead, mercury, kind of a cumulative type of thing?

A PARTICIPANT: I'd like to see --

MS. HALVERSON: Susan, you're --

A PARTICIPANT: Repeat that.

MS. HALVERSON: All right.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. There are certain kinds of contaminants that you get, like pesticides, you would get a little bit at a time, rather than, let's say, if I had an oil spill into a lake, and that was where we got our drinking water from.

That would be a major catastrophe. But
pesticides are a little bit at a time. Mercury would be a little bit at a time in fish. Lead, little bit at a time through your water. How do you find out about those kinds of contaminants? Does that make sense?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

MS. HALVERSON: Do you have an answer?

A PARTICIPANT: No.

A PARTICIPANT: Usually hear about it through the news.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: It’s released to the news sources.

MS. HALVERSON: Even the over-time kinds of things?

A PARTICIPANT: Well, yeah, because, I’m assuming scientists do studies. Food industries do studies. Government agencies do studies. And then they release their findings to the public.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I don’t even know if
they need to release it. I think the media picks up on something, and it becomes overblown to the extent that you panic, maybe more than you should.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Joanne, what -- oh, sorry. You had a question?

A PARTICIPANT: If you subscribe to a health type magazine --

A PARTICIPANT: An environmental magazine.

A PARTICIPANT: -- or environmental, right.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Health or environmental magazines. All right. Joanne, what kind of information would you like about contaminants such as these that you get in smaller amounts?

A PARTICIPANT: Well, maybe how long it would be before it would be, build up to where it would be dangerous to a person.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. All right. What we're going to be looking at today is
specifically information about mercury. What I'm going to do is show you three different examples of information.

We're going to look first of all at an opening paragraph, kind of introducing the subject, and then we're going to look at some information about that, that explains it and provides advice.

I have three different formats that I want to show you, and what I'd like you to do is to not look at how the information is laid out on the page, obviously, because it's just in rough form.

The type of information and the types of messages that are in the information that I'm going to provide: do they make their points clearly?

Can you understand what they're trying to say? Who's the target of this message? Is there enough detail? Is there too much detail? Those are the kinds of things I'd like us to focus on.
We’re going to start out, first of all, with example number five. Doesn’t that sound logical? Out of three examples, we’ll start with number five.

As you can tell, we’ve had some other groups that have narrowed these down a little bit on certain things.

A PARTICIPANT: I think we need one more down this way.

MS. HALVERSON: Need one more? Oh, got it? Okay. I’ll read this out loud, in case anyone forgot their glasses.

"Fish is an important source of high quality protein, vitamins, and minerals. Certain fish species, however, are known to contain higher levels of mercury than others.

"Pregnant women, and women of child bearing age are advised to eat a variety of seafood, and to avoid eating those species that may contain higher levels of mercury.

"These species are listed below."

Let’s stay on page one. Sorry.
A PARTICIPANT: I'm looking for the examples.

MS. HALVERSON: I know. There are the examples, but let's stay on page one just to begin. So, when you read this opening paragraph, does it do a good job of describing for you the hazard for mercury?

A PARTICIPANT: No.

A PARTICIPANT: No.

A PARTICIPANT: No.

MS. HALVERSON: No? Why not? Susan, or Donna?

A PARTICIPANT: I'm sorry.

MS. HALVERSON: It's quite all right.

Donna, go ahead.

A PARTICIPANT: It's telling us there's a danger, but it's not really saying how much of a danger.

A PARTICIPANT: Or why there's a danger.

A PARTICIPANT: Right. And they're just saying pregnant women and women of child
 bearing age. Why not everybody else?

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I realize there's more of a danger to them, but --

A PARTICIPANT: What kind of fish are they talking about, I guess. Does shark have a lot of mercury, or does dolphin have, or trout?

I'm not much of a fisherman.

MS. HALVERSON: These species will be listed below.

A PARTICIPANT: Well, I don't see that either, so --

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Don't worry.

I've got it on page two. Susan, do you want to comment?

A PARTICIPANT: Well, I was just noticing, it says, some could contain higher levels of mercury, but it doesn't go into, at all, why that's bad.

MS. HALVERSON: Um-hmm.

A PARTICIPANT: What if I don't know that mercury is bad, and I'm wondering what it is
about mercury that I need to avoid.

MS. HALVERSON: Ah, okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Why is it bad? What's it going to do?

MS. HALVERSON: Is there anything else that's confusing about this introduction?

A PARTICIPANT: Does it affect us at all, men?

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Or is it just --

A PARTICIPANT: What about me?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Can men eat as much as we want?

MS. HALVERSON: All right. Any other confusing things about this paragraph?

A PARTICIPANT: To me it's not really cohesive. It says, high quality of protein, and then it drops immediately into the dangers of mercury.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Let's go on,
then. Bill wanted to know what these species listed below are, and here they are.

"FDA warns consumers who are pregnant, thinking of becoming pregnant in the next six months, nursing a baby, choose the fish you eat carefully.

"Four types of fish contain high levels of methyl mercury residue that can harm developing fetuses and nursing babies. The methyl mercury can accumulate in your body, so it is important to limit the amount you eat.

"Be aware of these four fish." And then it has, "Limit what you eat. Mackerel: do not eat. Shark: do not eat. Sword fish: do not eat. Tuna: fresh or frozen, three times a month. Canned, four three-ounce servings a week.

"All other types of fish are safe to eat, such as shellfish, halibut, or processed fish, such as fish sticks."

Okay. What is the most important point you take from this particular piece of advice?

A PARTICIPANT: What not to eat.
MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Definitely do not eat mackerel, shark, or sword fish.

A PARTICIPANT: In bold letters, do not eat.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Does this handout do a good job at explaining who should be worried about mercury?

A PARTICIPANT: Yes.

A PARTICIPANT: Um-hmm.

A PARTICIPANT: Yes.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, and who do they say should be worried about it?

A PARTICIPANT: Pregnant women.

A PARTICIPANT: Or people thinking about becoming pregnant.

A PARTICIPANT: Or nursing moms.

MS. HALVERSON: All right. Now, Steve asked a question earlier: "What about the rest of us, like men?"

A PARTICIPANT: Well, what about women?

A PARTICIPANT: It still doesn't answer
that, because it says it accumulates in your body, so I'd assume I don't want all that accumulating in my body.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Why is it harmful to babies, and not harmful to adults?

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Or other children.

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, so it isn't answering that question for you?

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

A PARTICIPANT: No.

MS. HALVERSON: All right. So, let's say you read this sheet of information that had the introductory paragraph and this. Steve, what kind of response would you have then? Would it affect the way you would look at eating fish?

A PARTICIPANT: I don't know, I really like shark and sword fish already, so now I'm wondering, would it be better not to eat it?

This still sort of one answer. Would you be
healthier if you don’t eat it?

MS. HALVERSON: Michael?

A PARTICIPANT: This is telling me that

I’m going to go home and boot up the computer

when we get out of here.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. All right.

A PARTICIPANT: It wouldn’t bother me

in the slightest, because it looks like it’s

talking more to women than men.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Donna, you’re a

woman.

A PARTICIPANT: I was going to say, I

don’t understand -- okay, I understand when

you’re pregnant or thinking of becoming pregnant,
or nursing, you do have to be more careful about
certain things, but if this can happen to babies,
then there’s got to be a danger to just the

average person, I would think.

A PARTICIPANT: For every person.

A PARTICIPANT: Why does it just build

up in their body and nobody else’s?

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Susan, did
A PARTICIPANT: That's exactly my thought. I wouldn't touch it either. Just because the warning goes out to pregnant, nursing, and babies, I think that's a warning to everyone, to me. That's how I take things like that. I think I'll just avoid it.

A PARTICIPANT: My question would be, how does it harm developing fetuses and nursing babies? In what way are they harmed by this?

A PARTICIPANT: I would want to know that.

MS. HALVERSON: Any other questions it raises for you?

A PARTICIPANT: I eat a lot of tuna. I know it says nursing babies, but I agree, if it's affecting them, it might be affecting me, and I just don't know it, because I have other allergy reactions to fish anyway, so I kind of watch that.

MS. HALVERSON: Ah, okay.

A PARTICIPANT: But I know when I eat
fish, I usually have to suffer the consequences.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. How about that tuna issues? Canned tuna. Pregnant women or those nursing babies could eat four three-ounce servings a week. What does that say to you?

A PARTICIPANT: It's processed.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, they're getting processed.

A PARTICIPANT: Why is the fresh worse?

What do they do to it?

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: That the canned is okay?

MS. HALVERSON: Would that affect how much tuna you would eat at all, the fact that they're putting that on there?

A PARTICIPANT: Probably not.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I'm sorry, but yeah, I mean, we don't eat fresh or frozen tuna that often, but canned tuna, we do quite a bit.

A PARTICIPANT: So it's got to be the
way they process it, to eliminate the mercury, to
make it less.

MS. HALVERSON: How are the risky kinds
of fish specified on this particular chart?

A PARTICIPANT: Don't eat.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. How would you
classify tuna? As a risky fish, or not a risky
fish?

A PARTICIPANT: It goes from very risky
down to not so risky.

A PARTICIPANT: Not so bad.

A PARTICIPANT: And why is it just
these fish? What about the others?

A PARTICIPANT: You know, they are
where they're at.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I would want to know,
why aren't they affected.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, let's imagine
that we're all pregnant women around here, and we
get this information from our doctors. So, we're
trying to decide what to eat. How would you
interpret this information if you were a pregnant woman?

A PARTICIPANT: I wouldn't eat it.

MS. HALVERSON: How about the tuna fish?

A PARTICIPANT: Wouldn't eat it.

MS. HALVERSON: Why not?

A PARTICIPANT: Might eat the canned.

A PARTICIPANT: Little bit.

A PARTICIPANT: Don't take any chances.

A PARTICIPANT: There's too much other stuff to eat for nine months. I'd survive without my canned tuna for nine months.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Holly?

A PARTICIPANT: I agree. I wouldn't eat any of it.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. How about the stuff on the bottom, where it says, "All other types of fish are safe to eat, such as shellfish, halibut, or processed fish such as fish sticks."
A PARTICIPANT: It's a good excuse to eat shrimp.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, so you are saying you wouldn't eat any of these that are listed up here --

A PARTICIPANT: Huh-uh.

MS. HALVERSON: -- but you would eat the other kinds of fish, or shellfish.

A PARTICIPANT: I would question it, because halibut --

A PARTICIPANT: There's no number on these things. To me, it's either an all or none type thing.

A PARTICIPANT: Maybe if it was in a chart form, where all the different types of seafood were listed, and what the risks were.

A PARTICIPANT: Personally --

A PARTICIPANT: But even then, if was pregnant, I would probably eat seafood in definite moderation.

A PARTICIPANT: Um-hmm.

A PARTICIPANT: Just try to avoid it in
general, I guess.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Joanna?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I would avoid it for the nine months.

MS. HALVERSON: All seafood, or just the ones listed?

A PARTICIPANT: Definitely the ones listed.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Does that include tuna fish, or not, for you?

A PARTICIPANT: Yes, that would include tuna fish, and that's normally what I eat, mostly canned tuna.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. And why would you cut that out?

A PARTICIPANT: Because, like what she said. For nine months, I can go without anything that doesn’t seem healthy.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. All right. Let’s set this one aside, and I have another one that I’m going to be sending out. For our second example, I have “Example Three,” to keep up with
our numbering scheme, here.

This one says, "A recent report from

the National Academy of Sciences looked at the
evidence that mercury can cause learning problems
in children exposed to high levels of mercury in
the mother's diet during pregnancy.

"Since fish are the main source of
dietary exposure to mercury, the EPA and FDA are
providing guidelines about the kinds and amount
of fish that pregnant and nursing mothers, and
women of child bearing age, can safely eat
without exposing their children to any
significant risk of harm.

Okay. When you read that introductory
paragraph, and let's just try and forget the
other one for a little bit here, does this do a
good job of describing the hazard of mercury to
you?

A PARTICIPANT: Yes.

A PARTICIPANT: Yes.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, what is it about
this one that does? Holly?
A PARTICIPANT: Well, it says that it can cause learning problems, and that's what my question was on the first one. How is it harmful, and what are the results of that?

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: And I think it's, since the report came from the National Academy of Sciences, to me, that sounds like something I would believe or listen to, more than this. This doesn't say where they got this from.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Whereas this would make me tend to believe it more.

A PARTICIPANT: Awfully wordy though.

A PARTICIPANT: But they explain it well. They say where the mercury comes from in larger quantities, they say what the problems are, and it explains who should be careful.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Would this kind of introduction help you understand who should pay attention to the advice that's going to be given, and why?
A PARTICIPANT: More, yes.

A PARTICIPANT: Yes.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, and why would that be?

A PARTICIPANT: Because it talks about the learning problems in children that is the result of the mother's diet during pregnancy.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Is there anything about this particular introduction that is confusing to you?

A PARTICIPANT: No.

A PARTICIPANT: Uh-uh.

A PARTICIPANT: No.

MS. HALVERSON: Nothing? Joanna?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, the first sentence, the wording on it is very different.

"A report looked at the evidence that mercury can cause learning problems in children exposed to high levels of mercury in the mother's diet during pregnancy."

Those are huge, to keep track of that all the way through, for the average person.
MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: That would be a lot.

A PARTICIPANT: If you ate too much mercury, you couldn't follow that.

MS. HALVERSON: Mike, did you have a comment?

A PARTICIPANT: No. I agree with what people are saying.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I do like the fact that it says fish are the main source of dietary exposure to mercury.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. So that clarifies something that wasn't clarified in the earlier one.

A PARTICIPANT: But it still raises the question, does it affect, at all, learning abilities in adults? Does it have zero?

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: That's what I would still be wondering.

A PARTICIPANT: Okay.
1 A PARTICIPANT: That would be my
2 question too. What happens while you’re pregnant
3 could affect the kid, but what happens if you’re
4 six years old and eat a lot of fish. That could
5 cause, possibly, learning problems, for adults
6 too.
7 A PARTICIPANT: Right.
8 MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Let’s go ahead
9 and turn to the second page, here. “What kind of
10 fish should I eat?
11 "Women who are, or may become pregnant
12 within six months, and nursing mothers, should
13 consume types of fish known to have low levels of
14 mercury (see Table 1) and should avoid fish known
15 to have high mercury levels (see Table 2).
16 "The fish in Table 1 can generally be
17 eaten a total of two to three times per week
18 without concern for adverse effects from mercury,
19 with each meal size being six ounces of cooked
20 fish, or eight ounces of uncooked fish.
21 "Breaded fish sticks, fish sandwiches,
22 and imitation crab meat are generally made from
these fish, and so usually have low levels of mercury."

And then, "Table 1: Fish and Seafood that are generally low in mercury. May be consumed a total of two to three times per week, by pregnant and nursing women."

It has three columns of all kinds of fish.

"What fish should I avoid? The fish in Table 2 are known to have high levels of mercury, and should be avoided by women who are, or may become pregnant within the next six months, and nursing mothers.

"Table 2: Fish and seafood that are generally high in mercury. Should be avoided by pregnant and nursing women. King mackerel, shark, sword fish, tile (sp) fish (or ocean white fish).

"What about tuna? For canned tuna, which is the most frequently consumed purchased fish, a total of two to three, three-ounce cans may be consumed per week.
"What about fish not on the lists? For all other fish and seafood not mentioned, consumption should be limited to one meal per week, six ounces cooked, eight ounces uncooked, by women who are, or may become pregnant within six months, and nursing mothers.

"This applies to fish bought in a store or restaurant, and to all fresh water fish caught by you or your family in local waters."

Okay. When you read that advice, what is the most important point taken from this particular piece of advice?

A PARTICIPANT: It's definitely saying pregnant women shouldn't, or even if you think you might become pregnant, which tends to make me think it's going to stay in your body for awhile.

A PARTICIPANT: Um-hmm.

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

A PARTICIPANT: But why just women?

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, it gives you a good list of fish to choose from, you know,
should you want to consume them, and you're pregnant.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: But it's also saying all seafood has some sort of mercury in it.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: That you should limit the amount that you eat.

A PARTICIPANT: Just don't worry about the four. All fish have some mercury available to it.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I think it's hard to read and understand, but I do think it's written more in a medical, you'd find this more in a medical journal as opposed to giving it to a consumer.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Does this handout do a good job at explaining who should be worried about mercury?

A PARTICIPANT: Yes.

A PARTICIPANT: Absolutely.
MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Assuming those are the only categories at risk.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Assuming that.

A PARTICIPANT: Yes.

MS. HALVERSON: It sounds like there's still question around the table about that.

A PARTICIPANT: Um-hmm.

MS. HALVERSON: What is distinctive about this approach compared to the last one?

A PARTICIPANT: Well, it tells you a list of what is okay to eat, and not just what you shouldn't eat.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: For me, listing this many is a little more believable than just listing a few species.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Plus, I like that it lists, it says something about the foods not on the list, in case there's something you're thinking about eating, and it's not on there.
MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: It gives you the guidelines for that.

MS. HALVERSON: Michael, you want to comment?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah. This explains why instead of saying just don't do it.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: So it's a little more informative.

A PARTICIPANT: It's more comforting.

A PARTICIPANT: It gives information though, that's not, for canned tuna, which is the most frequently consumed purchased fish -- I mean, it's so wordy.

It uses too many words if you were going to be, like we said, giving it to a consumer group. Some information doesn't need to be -- I don't know. It's very wordy to me.

A PARTICIPANT: I'm kind of confused to me. It says white fish up there, and mackerel, Atlantic; then another paragraph says king
mackerel, tile fish is ocean white fish. What's the difference? I guess I wouldn't know.

A PARTICIPANT: White fish is white fish.

A PARTICIPANT: Ocean white fish compared to white fish. What's the difference?

A PARTICIPANT: I wouldn't know.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: That kind of gets me, because I don't fish that well myself.

MS. HALVERSON: So how does this particular sheet, then, indicate to you which fish are the risky fish?

A PARTICIPANT: Must be sole, because it's on there twice.

A PARTICIPANT: Sure it.

A PARTICIPANT: Any kind of sole.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. How do you tell which ones are the risky fish on this.

A PARTICIPANT: By looking at Table 2.

A PARTICIPANT: By Table 2, yeah.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. How would you
1 categorize Table 1, then?
2 A PARTICIPANT: It's the hallelujah
3 table.
4 A PARTICIPANT: I'd say those are the
5 most common fish that are eaten from the sea.
6 A PARTICIPANT: You know, if you really
7 liked fish, you'd probably still go to Table 1
8 for something that you could eat. If you didn't
9 care that much, you'd probably just dismiss all
10 of them, and just figure, forget it, I'm not
11 going to go find the name, because I don't go for
12 fish that much anyway.
13 MS. HALVERSON: Okay.
14 A PARTICIPANT: Just not eat it.
15 A PARTICIPANT: But you're not
16 pregnant, either.
17 A PARTICIPANT: Well, that's true. If
18 I were, I'd have other things to worry about.
19 MS. HALVERSON: Okay. How about our
20 Table 2, we decided are the ones that are the
21 riskiest fish, and Table 1, Mike called the
22 hallelujah table, so how would the rest of you
categorize Table 1?

A PARTICIPANT: It would be a safer selection.

MS. HALVERSON: Safer? Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Lower risk.

MS. HALVERSON: Lower risk. All right.

How about tuna? Where would you put that in terms of safer or riskier?

A PARTICIPANT: They're saying you can't eat it but two to three times a week, certain amounts, so I would put it in Table 1.

A PARTICIPANT: But they didn't --

A PARTICIPANT: Which I don't understand, why it's not in Table 1.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: Well, they didn't put in Table 2 that it is a risk. Or is that considered ocean white fish?

(Simultaneous discussion.)

A PARTICIPANT: In Table 1 you can eat six ounces of cooked fish or eight ounces of uncooked fish. But tuna, you can only eat three
ounces at a time. So you can only eat half as much.

A PARTICIPANT: But I just wonder why it's separated.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: Why it asks the question about tuna.

A PARTICIPANT: Why isn't it just on the list with the other foods?

A PARTICIPANT: Maybe that's because it's most frequently consumed.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: It probably is, and because it's been pulled out, it draws my attention more to it as to, oh, there's something more about tuna than these other fish.

A PARTICIPANT: If I was presenting this, I think I would put the most toxic ones first, then the more acceptable ones, and then put tuna.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Where would you put that last category, then, about fish now on
Are you saying that they are less toxic than --

what are you saying about them?

A PARTICIPANT: Just saying --

A PARTICIPANT: They're safe.

A PARTICIPANT: -- if you can't find it above, then this is what it was.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I'd say if they're not on the Table 2, then probably they're going to be okay. I hope.

A PARTICIPANT: But if you're in the fish industry, or whatever, you're going to want to put the fish that people can eat first.

A PARTICIPANT: Because you wouldn't want to scare them.

A PARTICIPANT: Well, so, look at all...
the choices you have. These are only four fish you can’t eat. We have two dozen fish that you can eat. A more positive spin.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. How about this "fish not on the list" though? It says, "For all fish and seafood not mentioned, consumption should be limited to one meal per week by women who are or may become pregnant" as opposed to the two to three times per week in Table 1. Why do you think they’re saying that?

A PARTICIPANT: That would say to me that anything that’s not on the top list is slightly higher in mercury.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: But not as high as Table 2.

A PARTICIPANT: Fish are still of a concern, but just be careful of what you are eating.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah. Use moderation.

A PARTICIPANT: I think it’s kind of misleading when you look at it closely.
A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: Because they suggest these only once a week, but Table 1, you can go two to three times a week.

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

A PARTICIPANT: So I've been not reading real closely and thinking these other are a lesser risk than the first table.

MS. HALVERSON: Than Table 1? Ah.

A PARTICIPANT: But that's not what it says, when you really read it.

A PARTICIPANT: No, it's not.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. It says, "This applies to fish bought in a store or restaurant and to all fresh water fish caught by you or your family in local waters."

How much mercury, then, how do you decide --

A PARTICIPANT: They can't make that statement about your local water.

A PARTICIPANT: How much mercury there is --
MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: They don't have a clue.

A PARTICIPANT: I'm curious why you can eat more if it's uncooked than if it's cooked. You'd think if you would cook it, it would be a little safer.

A PARTICIPANT: Huh.

A PARTICIPANT: But it does say that you can only do six ounces cooked, eight ounces uncooked.

A PARTICIPANT: Um-hmm.

A PARTICIPANT: I think they mean by weight.

A PARTICIPANT: Weight.

A PARTICIPANT: Oh, after you cook it.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, let's put Michael on the spot. He's our fisherman in the group.

You're out catching -- what are you going to catch for us?

A PARTICIPANT: Oh, I don't know, probably just go for trout today.

MS. HALVERSON: Go for trout. Okay.
A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. So we're going to have a trout dinner that Michael caught for us. Then there's a plate of herring. My relatives are from Norway, so we have herring over here. That's on Table 1.

How do we decide which has more mercury? A commercially caught herring, or Mike's fresh caught fish?

A PARTICIPANT: Going by this?

MS. HALVERSON: Um-hmm.

A PARTICIPANT: It would be my fresh caught fish that would have the more mercury.

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. And what's your gut feeling?

A PARTICIPANT: I'd eat it anyway.

MS. HALVERSON: But in terms of mercury. Do you feel like the fish that you catch is going to have more, or less, mercury per portion?

A PARTICIPANT: I don't how it would.
A PARTICIPANT: It would depend on the
area that you're from, I would think, too, the
locale.

A PARTICIPANT: Without the list, I
don't know, I'd tend to go for the fresh caught
tROUT, just because, especially if you're in
Colorado, you think there's going to be less of
that than something they're catching off the East
cOAST, you know.

MS. HALVERSON: Hey, watch that East
cOAST stuff.

MS. HALVERSON: All right. So your gut
feeling would be that trout caught in your
beautiful streams here in Colorado would be safe?

A PARTICIPANT: Sure, if you want to
look at some type of woods.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, and how about you
go to the store and you buy commercially caught
fish, versus the fresh caught trout, in general?

A PARTICIPANT: I think I would feel
safer about the fresh caught.

MS. HALVERSON: Because?
A PARTICIPANT: Well, for one thing, it definitely tastes better. The fresher it is, the better it tastes. So I'm assuming from that, it's better, but I guess not necessarily so.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Now I live in Maryland. If I catch fish out there, would you feel safer with my fresh caught fish in Maryland, or commercial fish you could buy in my store?

A PARTICIPANT: I've seen the water in Maryland.

A PARTICIPANT: When I was stationed there, I fished there all the time.


A PARTICIPANT: I love to fish.

A PARTICIPANT: I'd eat some crab if I was out there.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: If it's farm raised fish, it's going to be more what the fish is consumed, so my tendency would be, yeah, if I caught the fish and knew where it came from, yeah, I'd want the fresh fish. But otherwise,
it's still probably coming from some sort of a factory raised something or another.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. All right.

Let's see. So, again, we're going to be our pregnant women looking at this list, and we have to decide what we're going to eat, what we're not going to eat. Bill, during your pregnancy, what are you going to eat?

A PARTICIPANT: Shrimp.

MS. HALVERSON: Shrimp? Okay. Steve?

A PARTICIPANT: Oh, anything off of Table 1.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Susan? What are you going to eat?

A PARTICIPANT: You know, I would still be cautious. When I was pregnant I was that way. I just stayed away from any possible problems. So I would probably treat myself to lobster once while I was pregnant if I was really dying for seafood.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Otherwise, I'd avoid
it.

MS. HALVERSON: Phyllis, how about you?

A PARTICIPANT: I'd probably just stick to canned tuna.

MS. HALVERSON: All right. Susan?

A PARTICIPANT: If I'm looking at this, I may just, because it says you can consume it two or three times a week, I'd probably would maybe once a month from Table 1.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Now, I'm sensing something here. Our pregnant men --

MS. HALVERSON: -- are saying, this is what I seem to be hearing. You guys seem to be saying, okay, look at this. The chart says I can eat this, I'll eat that.

The pregnant women, I'm hearing saying, I'm probably going to interpret it more cautiously than they tell me. Is that correct?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I feel that way.

I don't know, if you just eat it a few times, it's what it says there. I don't know what kind of effects it's going to have, really, on a guy.
A PARTICIPANT: I figure meat's bad for you too, and if you overdo it, there's something wrong with it and it's not good for you, so as long as you stay within the limits, and I like fish a lot, so --

A PARTICIPANT: I think also women are bombarded when they're pregnant or thinking about being pregnant, about all of the terrible things that can happen to the fetus. Men probably don't get bombarded that much.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Donna?

A PARTICIPANT: You know, I think I still would eat the fish in moderation, you know. I wouldn't, after seeing this, definitely not eat any of the ones on Table 2, but the others, I would, but just not go overboard, just like you wouldn't anything else.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Now let me ask you. When you look at Table 1 and it lists out something like 24 different kinds of fish, and it says, "generally low in mercury, may be consumed two to three times per week;" and you look at
Table 1 and it doesn't list all those out, are you more, or less, likely to eat something that's listed specifically, or that just says, if it's in this category it's probably okay?

A PARTICIPANT: I like the specifics.

MS. HALVERSON: You like having it listed out specifically?

A PARTICIPANT: So I can look at it, and say, yes, it's listed there, it's probably okay.

MS. HALVERSON: Holly, I'm taking you out to dinner, and they have your favorite on the menu. It's mahi-mahi. It's not listed on Table 1, and you're pregnant.

A PARTICIPANT: Um-hmm.

MS. HALVERSON: How would you interpret that?

A PARTICIPANT: I probably wouldn't get it.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, so --

A PARTICIPANT: Just because of the uncertainty. When I was pregnant, I was just
very careful about everything like that. So if
it wasn't listed on the okay list --

MS. HALVERSON: How about the rest of
you? Let's deal with real women here, rather
than our pregnant men, for a minute, here. Okay,
so the pregnant women are here.

If it's not listed specifically on
Table 1, but it's a fish that -- what about fish
not on the list? It's definitely not on Table 2.
Mahi-mahi is not on Table 2. What do you say?
Phyllis?

A PARTICIPANT: No.

MS. HALVERSON: It's our special of the
day.

A PARTICIPANT: I know, but, you know?
I know, because if it's not on here, then it's
probably worse than what is on here.

MS. HALVERSON: So if it's not listed
on there, you're not taking the chance?

A PARTICIPANT: No.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Back to our
pregnant men. Would you guys, how would you do
A PARTICIPANT: I'd eat it.

MS. HALVERSON: You'd eat it?

A PARTICIPANT: Then again, I'm not (indiscernible).

A PARTICIPANT: That's why men don't get pregnant.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: It says it's okay for one meal a week. I'd probably eat it.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: But if you usually only eat fish maybe twice a week anyway, you know, this is one out of the two times you're going to eat fish anyway.

A PARTICIPANT: Or even once a week.

MS. HALVERSON: He does sound like a man, doesn't he, that logic for pregnancy? Okay. Our third example is "Example Four," which I'm going to pass out here.

I've never had four pregnant men in a group before.
MS. HALVERSON: Okay. "Example Four" says, "Seafood is an important and growing part of the American diet. Seafood provides significant nutritional benefits to consumers. "Some seafood, particularly large ocean fish and fresh water fish caught in contaminated waters, may contain levels of mercury that pose a risk to babies of pregnant and nursing mothers. "The FDA and EPA advise women who are pregnant, or may become pregnant within six months, or are nursing mothers, to follow the safe eating guidelines outlined below. "This advice should not be taken as a need to abstain from consuming seafood except as indicated." A PARTICIPANT: That's really wordy. MS. HALVERSON: Wordy? Okay. A PARTICIPANT: That sounds like they flip flopped a little. I mean, they're, I don't like the wording in that. MS. HALVERSON: What do you mean flip flopped, Steven?
A PARTICIPANT: It's, they're saying they realize seafood is a good part of the diet, and then they jump into, yeah, we know that it's a problem for nursing mothers, and then they drop back, saying, oh, but by the way, we don't want you to abstain from the seafood industry, because they'll get pissed off at us.

A PARTICIPANT: When I read this, it just makes me laugh --

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: -- and say, this is put out by the seafood industry --

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, right.

A PARTICIPANT: -- they want to sell fish --

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

A PARTICIPANT: -- regardless of what it may do.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Joanna, did you?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, it's the same reason.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.
A PARTICIPANT: In this one, they don't say what the risk is. In the other one, it said what it causes, learning disabilities and things like that, but this one doesn't say. It seems like they're trying to dance around it.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: Right. "It may contain"

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: "But it's an important growing part of the American diet."

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Is there any important information that you think is missing from this introduction?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

MS. HALVERSON: What?

A PARTICIPANT: Exactly what the risks are.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Is a big one.
MS. HALVERSON: Will this kind of introduction help you understand who should be paying attention to the advice?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

MS. HALVERSON: In what way?

A PARTICIPANT: In the one wordy sentence there.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: That was late in the --

A PARTICIPANT: I was going to say.

MS. HALVERSON: Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant within six months, or are nursing mothers?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I like the, you may affect your kid by eating seafood, but don't take that as a need to abstain.

A PARTICIPANT: That's in the middle of the paragraph. In a paragraph, the first sentence and the last sentence are the important reading things.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Maybe that's all one
sentence. I didn't look at it that closely.

A PARTICIPANT: It kind of is. If your first and last would be the most important, it's "Seafood is an important and growing part of the American diet," and then, "This advice should not be taken as a need to abstain."

A PARTICIPANT: Right, right.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Let's look at the "As indicated" sidelines on the next page.

"Fish safe eating guidelines: fresh water farm raised catfish or trout: there's no mercury concern for these species. Ocean fish: sword fish, shark, king mackerel, and tile fish: no meals for women who are pregnant, women who may become pregnant in the next six months, and nursing mothers.

"American favorites: canned tuna: three-ounce serving. Up to four three-ounce servings per week for women who are pregnant, women who may become pregnant in the next six months, and nursing mothers. No limits for others as part of a balanced diet."
"There are no limits for anyone as part of a balanced diet for the following top species, which make up the majority of the seafood market: canned salmon, shrimp, salmon, pollock, catfish, cod, clams, flounder, scallops and fish sticks. "No one should eat lobster tamale."

A PARTICIPANT: What's lobster tamale?
A PARTICIPANT: I like this one best.
MS. HALVERSON: You like this one best so far?
A PARTICIPANT: This is like the other front page.

(Simultaneous discussion.)
A PARTICIPANT: It gives you more tuna; it lets you eat all the fish you want.
A PARTICIPANT: Plus the highlighted "No's" in this draw your attention right to the concern.
MS. HALVERSON: Okay.
A PARTICIPANT: It was talking about no limit for all others as part of a balanced diet. Does that mean all other people?
A PARTICIPANT: That's how I took it.

A PARTICIPANT: Or all other fish?

MS. HALVERSON: Ah, yes.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I took it as people.

A PARTICIPANT: I did too, but now I think it's fish.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. What is the most important point that you take from this particular piece?

A PARTICIPANT: That sword fish, shark, king mackerel and tile fish are definitely dangerous --

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: -- for pregnant women, or women who may become pregnant, and nursing mothers. It's definitely a threat. That's what they're saying. No meals.

A PARTICIPANT: Large letters, "No meals."

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.
A PARTICIPANT: I think "Do not eat" was more direct than "No meals."

A PARTICIPANT: It also --

A PARTICIPANT: We don't use that language.

A PARTICIPANT: -- but it also says that fresh water fish like catfish and trout are fine for --

A PARTICIPANT: Everybody.

A PARTICIPANT: -- everybody.

A PARTICIPANT: We're assuming.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, the farm raised. Not the ones you go out and catch.

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

MS. HALVERSON: So, what does it say about those, then?

A PARTICIPANT: They're very safe to eat.

MS. HALVERSON: About -- how about your stream trout?

A PARTICIPANT: It doesn't say.

A PARTICIPANT: It doesn't mention it.
MS. HALVERSON: Okay, so what would your interpretation be, then, from this page?

A PARTICIPANT: Well, it would tell me that there is probably some mercury in the trout that I'm catching.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: It would tell me they didn't study them.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: That's important to me.

MS. HALVERSON: What is distinctive about this particular approach, compared to the other two?

A PARTICIPANT: It doesn't have the chart.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Which, I don't know, to me is less imposing.

A PARTICIPANT: I think this is easier to understand than the second one.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah. I liked the chart initially, but now that they just say,
"There's no mercury concern for the fresh water farm raised catfish or trout," just in general, you could know that without having to see a list of --

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, so again, I'm going to ask the women to pretend we're pregnant for a few minutes here. If you're reading this page, and men, you don't have to be pregnant this time.

A PARTICIPANT: Thank you humbly.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, so all our pregnant women here, what kinds of decisions do we make? Donna?

A PARTICIPANT: I definitely would not eat the farm raised catfish or trout, the sword fish, the shark, the mackerel, or the tile fish. I definitely wouldn't eat those.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: The others, I may once in awhile, but it's not, I wouldn't be that concerned about that. Maybe the reason I'm saying this is, because years ago, when I was
pregnant, it wasn't such a big deal as what it is nowadays, you know, with the pregnant women, and it's probably because they didn't know what they know now. So maybe that's my reasoning with saying I would take a chance on eating some of this stuff.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Susan, you've been pretty --

A PARTICIPANT: This one's kind of vague to me. I know what absolutely not to eat, but I keep reading that last paragraph over and over as to what is okay to eat, so this one to me is worse. This doesn't say to me, it's okay to eat this, and I can look real quick and pick it out. So I definitely wouldn't be eating anything off of this one.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. And, here, let me play devil's advocate.

A PARTICIPANT: Okay.

MS. HALVERSON: Are you a meat eater?

A PARTICIPANT: Yes.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, so you would beef
or chicken?

A PARTICIPANT: Yes.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. So here, I have Lynn's Fish Market, and you eat beef and chicken, and you know that red meat, they say, limit your intake of red meat, and don't eat the fatty parts of poultry.

Here we've been saying fish is good for you, my Omega-3 fatty acids and all, there are no limits for anyone as part of a balance diet for the following top species, which make up the majority of the seafood market.

Now, why are you going to cut out my seafood, when you're going to go ahead and eat that other stuff?

A PARTICIPANT: Well, it says there are no limits. It doesn't say, this stuff is really good for you and you should eat this.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. All right.

A PARTICIPANT: The beef industry also says there are no limits on the beef.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.
A PARTICIPANT: And the pork industry says eat pork, so -- I'm the type, I don't go overboard on anything. I also don't get hysterical about everything and quit eating everything, because every week there's something different that we're supposed to avoid.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. My other pregnant women here? Joanna?

A PARTICIPANT: I would probably cut down on the amount of tuna that I consumed.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Why would that be?

A PARTICIPANT: I wasn't aware that it had mercury in it.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: It was a concern. I would at least keep track of what I am eating a week.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. How about catfish, cod, clams, down here? I know catfish is your favorite, right?

A PARTICIPANT: I like the catfish, and
I like salmon.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. So it says there are no limits as part of a balanced diet.

A PARTICIPANT: What's the difference between, I mean, is there no mercury, we're assuming that there is mercury in all these seafood favorites, because catfish is listed down there, as opposed to up -- the farm raised there is no mercury whatsoever, so we're assuming there is mercury down in all these other favorites.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Is that the assumption that you're making?

A PARTICIPANT: Even though it says that there's no limit.

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. So how would you, personally interpret that?

A PARTICIPANT: I'm interpreting it, even though they're saying there's no limits, I'm questioning, because there must be some mercury in it if it's listed, not under, you know, catfish is listed twice, so all these other fish
must also have some mercury, but maybe whatever scale they use, it's not on the red meter.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I have to wonder why they have this paragraph down at the bottom, and why the separate it from the fresh water farm raised catfish or trout as being okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Well, the farm raised, they can control the environment.

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, what they eat.

A PARTICIPANT: But then are they saying what's down below is not as safe? That's what I read.

(Simultaneous discussion.)

A PARTICIPANT: They probably don't expect it to have a high mercury level but --

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

A PARTICIPANT: That's why I kept reading that last one over again. I'm not sure what the message is on that one.

A PARTICIPANT: That there are no
limits on what you eat, but --

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, but why aren’t there?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: If it can accumulate in your body, and if I’m just pigging out on these types of fish all day long every day, will it build up?

MS. HALVERSON: Well, it says, no limits as a part of a balanced diet.

A PARTICIPANT: Okay.

MS. HALVERSON: So how do you interpret balanced?

A PARTICIPANT: Eat it every day, one meal.

A PARTICIPANT: Three meals a day.

A PARTICIPANT: Well, even just one meal a day, if you just eat fish.

MS. HALVERSON: So one meal of fish per day?

A PARTICIPANT: I mean, they’re saying that you shouldn’t. But it would be the same as
if you ate chicken every day.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. What does that last sentence mean, "No one should eat lobster tamale?"

(Simultaneous discussion.)

A PARTICIPANT: I think that's the --

MS. HALVERSON: This is the first group where nobody said, "What is lobster tamale?"

(Simultaneous discussion.)

A PARTICIPANT: I said that.

A PARTICIPANT: I think I know what it is.

A PARTICIPANT: Is it like, in a crab, you have the mustard?

A PARTICIPANT: I think it's that gunky stuff.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: It's one of the internal organs. It's either like the lungs, or the kidneys or something.
A PARTICIPANT: You're not going to get a whole lobster at a seafood restaurant, where they can eat everything.

A PARTICIPANT: It's green or yellow or something like that.

(Simultaneous discussion.)

A PARTICIPANT: Everything on a lobster is edible except for that.

A PARTICIPANT: It doesn't sound appetizing anyway.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. When you look at this in terms of not being a pregnant woman, what kinds of decisions do you make for your own balanced diet?

A PARTICIPANT: If you're not pregnant?

MS. HALVERSON: Um-hmm.

A PARTICIPANT: I still think if there's a danger to pregnant women, there's got to be a danger to the average person.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: There's just got to be.

A PARTICIPANT: My question is, if
you've got to eat it, if you're going to be pregnant in the next six months, you have to eliminate it or control it, why would you have to control it, if it's six months before you're pregnant or something?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, so it does stay in your body.

A PARTICIPANT: If it's building up in her body, why isn't it building up in his or somebody else's body?

A PARTICIPANT: That's because all you men are stupid because you've been eating so much fish.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. I would like to go back to the first one that I gave you, which is "Example Five" and just look at, just briefly review this again, the first paragraph, and then the chart.

Then somebody explain for me in plain English, we're going to try to distinguish among these three. Explain for me in the plainest English what "Example Five" is saying, the
distinctive message of "Example Five."

A PARTICIPANT: Mackerel, shark and sword fish pose a high threat.

MS. HALVERSON: Mackerel, shark and sword fish pose a high threat --

A PARTICIPANT: To pregnant women.

MS. HALVERSON: -- to pregnant women?

A PARTICIPANT: Or nursing.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Anyone else have a different capsule interpretation of this one?

A PARTICIPANT: Well, it says it's a high source --

(Tape change.)

MS. HALVERSON: -- fish is an important source of protein, vitamins and minerals, but there's danger involved.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, to pregnant women or nursing mothers.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. And then you would limit the three fish, Phyllis?

A PARTICIPANT: I would say, I would probably categorize it these three are
particularly suspect, and then go into the tuna
and the others, that they are less suspect.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. How would, less
suspect?

A PARTICIPANT: Than the mackerel,
shark and sword fish.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Any other
capsule interpretations of this "Example Five?"

A PARTICIPANT: This still just makes
me real curious as to why not?

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Why not those
three fish?

A PARTICIPANT: Um-hmm.

MS. HALVERSON: What is it about these
three fish?

A PARTICIPANT: And then the
highlighted heavy black lettering on this just,
you look at that and you go, I mean, why?

A PARTICIPANT: Why not?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, what are they
actually trying to tell me here? What did that
mackerel eat yesterday that I'm not supposed to?
MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Let's look at "Example Three" again, and do the same thing, kind of a one or two sentence summary.

A PARTICIPANT: Too wordy.

A PARTICIPANT: But I still do like them saying, a report from the National Academy of Sciences.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Even though it says "looked at the evidence," my personal feeling is, I would tend to believe it because of that more so than "Example Five."

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: It has more credibility.

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

A PARTICIPANT: It has a lot more credibility, just because of --

A PARTICIPANT: And I like that they said why. Isn't this the one where they said it will cause learning disabilities?

A PARTICIPANT: I like this one the
best. I think it needs to be worded more to the general public, but I like all the information the best.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: It's less threatening, almost, knowing exactly what it does, than letting my brain wander, and think of all these horrible things that this lead could possibly do. I like knowing. That's not so horrible. Okay, now I know, there will be learning problems, and --

A PARTICIPANT: This is how I can avoid --

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: I'm an old person and I don't care how stupid I get. I'll eat this.

MS. HALVERSON: So if you were going to summarize "Example Three" in one or two sentences, it would be, in plain English for me --

A PARTICIPANT: Don't eat fish.

A PARTICIPANT: Mercury can cause
learning problems in children.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I'd say if you were of that age, or pregnant, just to steer clear of it, and get your supplements in some other way.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

MS. HALVERSON: Sorry, I didn't hear that last part.

A PARTICIPANT: Get the supplements some other way.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I would say there are risks involved, but as it is a part of a good balanced diet, you don't need to avoid it altogether, that there are fish that you can safely consume once in awhile.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I think all three of them should address other people than --

A PARTICIPANT: Pregnant mothers.

A PARTICIPANT: -- pregnant mothers,
nursing mothers. Like men and then older women, or children.

A PARTICIPANT: Maybe this is from the TV actors association or something.

A PARTICIPANT: They could still make a note of it. They'll have the information.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, let's look again at the last one, "Example Four" and again, I have a real simple mind, so bring it down to one or two clear, plain English sentences for me.

A PARTICIPANT: I think it says a lot of Americans enjoy seafood, that they should be careful, because there are some dangers.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Any other interpretation there?

A PARTICIPANT: I think it's just what I initially said, that it's good but there's a risk.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: You know, it's good for you but there's a risk.

A PARTICIPANT: Anything in excess is
MS. HALVERSON: Okay. I'm going to go to the board, and given everything that we've been talking about tonight, let's just try and figure out, when they come up, I heard you say things you do and don't like about all of these. If you guys were developing a message, what are the kinds of things you would include in it?

A PARTICIPANT: A chart.

MS. HALVERSON: A chart. Of?

A PARTICIPANT: Of best to worst.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I would have one chart, just alphabetical, so you could find whatever you wanted real quick, and then next to it, "Don't eat," "Unlimited quantities," or "Moderation."

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: That would be simple.

A PARTICIPANT: That would be, wouldn't it?

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, and in terms of
who it should address. Pregnant women, or everyone?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: Everyone.

A PARTICIPANT: I think everyone.

MS. HALVERSON: Everyone?

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, it should speak to everyone.

A PARTICIPANT: Including young kids who aren't nursing anymore. Does it affect them?

A PARTICIPANT: I'd like to see why mercury was a problem.

MS. HALVERSON: Anything else?

A PARTICIPANT: It was nice when it had some credibility to it.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Which -- they mentioned National Academy of Sciences --

A PARTICIPANT: FDA.

A PARTICIPANT: EPA.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay, so include all three of those?

A PARTICIPANT: It would support the
research more, probably.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Anything else that we’ll definitely include, or clarify?

A PARTICIPANT: I think, it’s probably just me, but I would like more information on what problems it causes.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: With memory retention in kids --

A PARTICIPANT: Well, yeah, that’s because they’re pregnant. If it’s adults, you don’t know it’s going to affect adults.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah. And the younger children, school age children.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. And then in terms of the information, you wanted a chart of some kind?

A PARTICIPANT: I still think that’s easiest to read.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I think so.
MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: I like a chart.

MS. HALVERSON: I heard some of you saying, I want the chart to list for me the things that I can eat as a pregnant woman, as well as the "don't eat" and I hear others saying, just tell me what I can't eat. Is that correct?

A PARTICIPANT: I think I have to agree. I think to see them both would be nice. I'd like to know what I could eat, and it wouldn't hurt to know what you can't eat.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I'd rather not have anything questionable. You see it on a chart, you'd know for sure.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: And maybe without it getting too wordy, just if it's written in a percentage type form or something, just how much is too much.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.
A PARTICIPANT: Or we can even have the chart, again, in alphabetical order, and the ones that have the names in red, you can't eat.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, having those stand out a little bit more.

A PARTICIPANT: Wouldn't your doctor tell you, if you're pregnant, if you shouldn't eat some things, maybe?

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: That depends on the doctor. Some will give you a book and tell you to read it yourself.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Anything they should avoid in terms of format or wording or anything else? I heard a number of comments.

A PARTICIPANT: Not too wordy.

A PARTICIPANT: Right. Not run on sentences.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: Not to put people down, but so often, pregnant people are very young teenage girls, and they aren't going to read that
whole thing.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Short sentences.

A PARTICIPANT: To the point.

A PARTICIPANT: And to the point, right.

A PARTICIPANT: When I did technical writing for a manufacturer, it had to be seventh grade.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay.

A PARTICIPANT: You know they’ve lowered that to sixth grade now?

A PARTICIPANT: Oh no.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. Any other advice that you would give?

A PARTICIPANT: I didn’t like the last one where it said, seafood is a growing part of -- it’s like they are trying to tell me. Maybe to some people it’s not important.

A PARTICIPANT: Like they’re trying to convince you.

A PARTICIPANT: Like they’re trying to convince me.
A PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I don't like that. Don't try to sell me fish.

A PARTICIPANT: Right.

A PARTICIPANT: And I think when we were talking, too, we keep going just to seafood, but we were talking fresh water fish, too. I'd like to see some fresh water fish.

A PARTICIPANT: That list had good information on the last one. It said fresh water farm raised catfish or trout, that were concerned.

MS. HALVERSON: But look out for the Mike's of the world who are out there catching their own.

A PARTICIPANT: I love trout.

A PARTICIPANT: I do read a lot of soil and water studies, too. I try to know what's upstream from where I'm fishing, if it's a gold mine, or if I'm going to be catching heavily polluted fish or not.

MS. HALVERSON: So the stuff you're going to serve us is good, right?
A PARTICIPANT: Yep. It's great.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. I'd like to ask you to pass around "Example Three," then "Example Four," then "Example Five," and I'm going to run next door and see if there are some questions that I should ask that I haven't asked yet, okay? I'll be right back.

(Moderator leaves the room.)

A PARTICIPANT: Three?

A PARTICIPANT: Three.

A PARTICIPANT: Four.

A PARTICIPANT: Three, four, five.

A PARTICIPANT: Here's some fours.

(Moderator returns.)

MS. HALVERSON: Great.

A PARTICIPANT: You found out what lobster tamale is.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

MS. HALVERSON: I think it is that gunk.

A PARTICIPANT: We can eat it, because we're not pregnant.
MS. HALVERSON: I think it said everyone should avoid lobster tamale. Sorry.

A PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

A PARTICIPANT: I wouldn't eat it anyway.

A PARTICIPANT: I probably have eaten it and don't even know it.

MS. HALVERSON: Okay. They don't have any more questions for us, so I want to thank you all for being here this evening. If you head out to the front, I think Betty has something for you there. So thank you very much for coming.

A PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

(Whereupon the taping was concluded.)
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HELEN M. COLLINS, Transcriber