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“I believe that love, marriage, and childbirth are out of the question for me”

- Testimonies of plaintiffs in the 311 Children’s Thyroid Cancer Trial -

https://cnic.jp/english/?p=6793
(bouton téléchargeable pdf tout à la fin de ce lien original)

by Citizens' Nuclear Information Center, August 31, 2023

This is a translation of the second and third testimonies given by Plaintiff 6 and Plaintiff 5* on 7 September 2022, in the class action lawsuit against Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO). This lawsuit was filed in January 2022 by six people, aged 6 to 16 at the time of the meltdowns at Fukushima Daiichi, who have since developed thyroid cancer. The plaintiffs claim that their cancer is linked to exposure to radioactive contamination from the Fukushima Daiichi accident and they are demanding that the causal link between their cancer and exposure to radiation be recognized by TEPCO, and appropriate compensation be paid.

Translated by Elicia Cousins

(The first testimony can be read here and background on the 311 Children’s Thyroid Cancer Trial by lead attorney Ido Kenichi can be read here.)

* Plaintiffs are referred to by number as they do not wish to disclose their names publicly.

Plan

Statement of opinion by Plaintiff 6

“Three months ago, on May 26, there was the first oral argument of this trial. On that day, I entered a courthouse for the first time in my life. From my seat behind the screen, I could see only the profile of the judge. As a high school student, I never thought I would be a plaintiff in a trial, but when I sat in the plaintiff’s seat, I truly felt for the first time that I was a party to this case.

Just before the first session of this trial, I was hospitalized for isotope therapy. Isotope therapy is a treatment in which the entire thyroid gland is removed and then a large dose of radioactive iodine is ingested to prevent recurrence or metastasis. I am now in my third year of high school, 17 years old, and I am undergoing this treatment because I got thyroid cancer when I was in middle school and last year, it came back. Ladies and gentlemen of the court, please listen to my experience over the past 11 years.

1. At the time of the accident

The nuclear accident occurred when I was in my final year of preschool. I was taking a nap at home when a big earthquake hit us. Everything around me was shaking and many things fell down. I remember going outside with my mother to see what was going on. When we had to rush to evacuate by car, I thought I might not be able to come back.

At the hospital that served as the screening site for the evacuees, I was asked where I had come from. When I told them where my home was, they took off my shoes and made me wear slippers, so they could measure the radiation levels of my shoes. In that moment, it felt as though I was not being seen as an equal, and I felt alienated. I was so traumatized by this experience that I began to hide the fact that I was an evacuee.

2. When the cancer was found

When I was in the first year of middle school, I went through thyroid ultrasound screening at school. It was my third thyroid scan after the accident. When I was examined, the doctor and nurse who were watching the echo scans looked at my scan and were talking about something. The doctor was examining my thyroid by pressing the echo device against the thyroid area over and over again, so I was very anxious.

When I returned to the classroom, I realized how long I had been under examination because the person whose turn it was after me had already finished.

3. From the biopsy to the moment I knew about my cancer

I don’t remember much about the moment I was told I had cancer. But I do remember the fine needle aspiration biopsy very clearly. On that day, I went directly to the hospital on my way home from middle school. I remember writing things like my name on a piece of paper before the procedure. At that moment, tears started to well up all at once. *I’m about to get a needle stuck into my neck*, I thought. I was filled with anxiety about the potential pain. I was scared. I was about to do something I had never experienced before.

They had me lie down on an examination table. What I saw was a long, thin needle. When it was first inserted, the pain was so sharp that I accidentally moved and they needed to re-do it a second time. It hurt so much. The stabbing sensation felt very deep, which felt nauseating and painful. I wondered why I had to go through so much pain.

After that, I found out that I had cancer. I don’t really remember what exactly I thought at the time, but I think there was just vague anxiety. I was worried about what would happen to my body, if I had to be hospitalized, if I would have to miss school, and so on. I was thinking, *right, so it’s cancer. If I have to be hospitalized, I’ll fall behind in my studies*. After the biopsy, I came to terms with a lot of things and sensed a bit of a change in myself.

4. The first surgery

The first surgery was my first time for everything, and I was so nervous. The aftermath of the surgery was especially difficult. At first, I was very sleepy because the general anesthesia had not worn off. I woke up a few hours later, but this time I could not move my body, and for a long time I could not do anything even though I was awake. I could hardly sleep that day and had insomnia. That lasted so many hours, so it was mentally and physically tough.

After a day of total bed rest, I was able to eat for the first time in a day. But it was so painful each time I swallowed, and I couldn’t stop my tears. After fifteen minutes of trying hard to eat, I’d only managed to eat about a two-centimeter layer of my rice porridge. And that made me sad. I wondered what would happen to me from then on, and whether I would be able to lead the same life after the surgery as I had before the surgery. There were days when I couldn’t sleep because of the uncertainty of the future.

5. The second surgery

It was right around this time last year that I found out that my cancer had returned. When I had half of my thyroid removed in the first surgery, I thought I was all good to go, but it turned out that I had to have another surgery. The second time I was informed of my cancer, I was not surprised, just disappointed.

At the time of the first surgery, I was in my second year of middle school, so my family stayed with me in the hospital room the entire time I was there. But the second time, largely due to COVID-19, I was not able to see my family as much, which made me a little anxious. I had to tell the nurses myself when there was something wrong with my body or when I was in pain.

In the second surgery, all of the thyroid cancer was removed and the lymph glands were also removed, so it became difficult to raise my right shoulder. After the stitches were removed, I was surprised to lose feeling in the right half of my neck. It has been more than half a year since the surgery, and the feeling in my neck has now returned, but when I touch it, it feels indescribably dull and uncomfortable. Sometimes it feels tight, which is very painful. I think I have something similar to an aftereffect.

6. About the isotope therapy

I also had to undergo isotope therapy. The hospital stay was one week. At first, I thought it was surprisingly short, but once I was in the hospital, it felt like a very long week.

I took the medication in May of this year. It was shortly before the previous trial. I showered in the morning and the medication was administered at about 2:20 PM. When it was time to take the medication, I was face to face with the doctor through the door. My radiation dose was also measured.

Am I really going to take this medicine? I thought. I was afraid to take it, because it was being kept so carefully in a glass container with a heavy lid and was administered with such caution.

After taking the medicine, I had to distance myself from people. I understood this in my head, but it was emotionally difficult. At mealtime, I had to put my table in the corridor and sit on my bed to wait. One time, I went close to the table when they were serving food. The nurse then told me, “Stay away from me!” I felt that I was now in a situation where I had to keep my distance from people, which made me feel gloomy.

After I took the medication, time seemed to slow down. I spent all my time staring at the wall. There was an iPad in the room, but it had no game apps on it, so it was useless. The day after I took the medication, in the evening, my throat became swollen and hot, and it became a little difficult to breathe. I could only communicate these symptoms via the nurse call system, and I was worried because the swelling in my throat was getting worse and worse. After I made several calls to report changes in my symptoms, the doctor in charge decided to come and see me. When he examined my throat, I felt bad because he was still supposed to be keeping his distance from me.

Before the doctor came for his rounds, at about 3:00 p.m. I measured my radiation dose and it was 53 microsieverts. I was told that I would be discharged when the dose dropped below 30 microsieverts.

The next day, when I woke up in the morning, my voice was oddly hoarse. The doctor made his rounds around 9:00 a.m. I discussed my concerns about the swelling in my neck and the hoarseness of my voice. My dose was measured at 31.2 microsieverts. Since the dose was getting lower, it was decided that I could leave the hospital the next day as scheduled. In the afternoon, I got measured again and this time the dose had dropped to 24.

Right up until my discharge from the hospital, my throat was very swollen, and I had to take medicine and cool it down with an ice pack. My voice was also hoarse, and at one point it was hard to speak, but gradually I was able to do so. This was a side effect of the medication, so they said it could not be helped.

During my hospitalization, these side effects and the constant sitting still in the hospital room, wondering if I would be able to sleep, took a heavy toll on me mentally and physically. I do not want to go through this treatment again.

7. Concluding thoughts

The first oral argument for this trial was held on May 26, right after I underwent the harsh isotope treatment, so I came to Tokyo to attend the trial, despite concerns about my physical condition.

I experienced the nuclear accident before I entered elementary school and have been living in a small apartment as an evacuee for the past 11 years. Then, at the age of 13, I got cancer, and at the age of 17, I had my second surgery. I remember very little about the nuclear accident and the cancer screenings, as I was still very young and didn’t really understand what was happening. My way of thinking, my personality, and my dreams for the future all changed before I had clarity about any of it.

So, I am not sure what I want to do in the future. I think I just want to become a public servant who can lead a financially stable life. I believe that love, marriage, and childbirth are out of the question for me. For me, high school is not about enjoying my youth. Rather, it’s a place to get school recommendations for college admission, and to work toward a stable future. I keep my distance from my friends because deep relationships are troublesome. Sometimes I still have trouble sleeping because of the pressure to study hard and anxiety about the future.

I am worried about my future. In particular, I’m most worried about finances. If I turn 18 and can’t get medical insurance, what will happen to my future medical expenses? How will I live when my illness worsens? I am really anxious.

I am also worried about my mental health. When I think about how I will have to take this medication semi-permanently and that I will have to have regular checkups in the future for a long time, I am filled with indescribable anxiety. I hope that through this trial, I will be granted compensation that will allow me to live a secure and peaceful life in the future.

I have now shared the most important things that I wanted to share with you.”

< A recording of Plaintiff No. 6 reading her statement can be heard on OurPlanet-TV’s website here >

Statement of opinion by Plaintiff 5

“I have never been good at communicating what I think, either in writing or in words. Before this lawsuit began, I thought that the trial would be a one-time event. I also thought that one person would read aloud their statement of opinion on behalf of all the other plaintiffs. So, after the lawsuit was filed and we had a lot of discussions, and when all the plaintiffs decided to give their statements, I honestly thought that my role was done. But when I came to the court twice and heard the other plaintiffs share their painful experiences, I realized that even though we all have the same disease, we are all very different from each other. That’s when I thought that there was no way I wasn’t also going to share my own experiences.

I remember a lot from the past, but not much about recent events. And I’m not confident about what I’ve written. I drafted this statement little by little, with the help of weekly texting conversations with the lawyer. This is the longest piece of writing I’ve ever done. I would like to try my best to read it till the end without stumbling.

1. Radiation exposure

I was in my first year of middle school when the earthquake happened.

It was my school’s graduation ceremony that day, and school ended early. I bought lunch at 7/11, ate it at my friend’s house while we hung out and had fun. I remember my friend and I both bought *oden* (hot pot). Right then, the emergency siren went off on my phone and the earthquake hit. We’d never heard that siren or experienced such a big earthquake, so we all rushed outside. It was snowing, and I remember talking to my friends about how it felt like it was the end of the world.

After we finished contacting our families, we went back into my friend’s house and turned on the news. The phrase ‘seismic intensity 6’ flashed across the screen. When I saw footage of the tsunami and my friends crying as they watched, I finally grasped how terrible the situation was.

I remember the nuclear accident well because my aunt was very concerned about radiation.

There was a big difference between those who cared about radiation and those who didn’t. I was on the side of those who didn’t care about radiation, so nothing changed, and I kept living my life in a carefree way.

I watched videos of the explosion only in passing, but I got the impression that the damage caused by harmful rumors and the intensity of the negative reactions toward Fukushima was only getting worse.

2. School life

School vacation lasted a little longer than usual. Even after the new semester started, it was a bit unsettling. There were several students who had had left in order to evacuate, including some of my friends. Maybe because of the shock of it all, I started going to school less and less frequently. Gradually, I stopped going to school altogether.

Even though I stopped going to school, I still showed up for club activities. I only went to campus after school hours, and I didn’t go straight home after club activities were over. I stayed at school late at night, getting up to no good near the school gate or in the park, and the teacher warned me about it.

I didn’t have any friends around me who cared about radiation, so I played normally. When it rained, I’d go home while letting it fall on me. I didn’t even wear the device meant to measure exposure that the school had given me to carry when I went outside. I left it at home.

But my aunt was very concerned about radiation exposure, and I think she felt that it could affect her body one day. Still, I think I felt that I’d be fine. My own family didn’t seem to be that concerned about it either, so we went out and had fun as usual.

On the weekends, I’d often take the train to Sukagawa with my friends to take *purikura* photos at the Aeon Town department store. It was cheaper to take photos there than in my hometown, but the train fare was more expensive than the *purikura*, so it was an odd choice of activity.

While I was not attending school, I’d take the bus to a place near the city hall for kids like me who also weren’t going to school. Sometimes I’d have someone drive me there and back. And sometimes, I’d spend a long time walking home.

3. Diagnosis

Since I was not attending school, I hadn't gotten a thyroid examination there. They sent a notice to my house twice, but I still refused. Not for any particular reason—I just thought it was a hassle and that it wasn't necessary. The third time the notice came, my parents said this was the last time they'd be doing the screening. I figured I'd go if it was going to be the last chance.

When I finished the echo scan, for some reason I had a hunch that I might have cancer. I told my parents. Sure enough, I received a notice for re-examination.

It was a re-examination at Fukushima Medical University. At first, I was very scared of the needle that had to be inserted into my neck for cytological diagnosis. I consider myself very tolerant of pain, but at that time I was terrified. I couldn't see exactly what was happening, but there was the pain from the needle, and there was also painful pressure on my neck. The pain from that other pressure felt even stronger than the pain of the needle. For some reason they did it twice.

I was then diagnosed with cancer. I suspected it was cancer after the first examination, so I didn't feel anything. But my mother was crying and in shock.

The hospital visit to Fukushima Medical University was very depressing. First of all, it took a little over an hour by car to get to the university, and then I had to wait for another 2-3 hours before I was examined, which was very depressing. I was in a dark corridor with my face down the whole time. All I remember seeing is the wire from my headphones. I was probably listening to songs by Vocaloids, Radwimps, Yonezu Kenshi, and others. But I don't remember much.

While I was waiting, there was a doctor who talked to me, perhaps a counselor. Around that time, I was always feeling irritable, so I think there were days where I had a bad attitude. I feel bad for that counselor when I think about it now.

I was also irritable during the examination. When I asked my mother about something that was bothering me, she asked the doctor on my behalf. Each time, the doctor would say something like, 'It's okay, you're worried, right?' The doctor's expression and words and behavior really irritated me. I was even more annoyed that they didn't reduce the amount of waiting time.

I don't remember how often I went to the hospital. I got used to having my blood drawn.

At first, I was surprised at how much blood was taken. But now I am used to it and think, *that's about right*. But even now, I can't bring myself to like hospitals. The hospital space itself. Because it's full of people who are just waiting.

4. Surgery

The surgery was on my birthday. As far as I could remember, I usually got bad weather, like rain, on my birthday. But it was sunny that day. The doctor was the one who had to perform the surgery, but it still felt like a hassle to me, and I was anxious. I hated it. If I were given the option now, I wouldn't want to do it.

But I'm glad I got to have the experience of general anesthesia. Regardless of my will, I lost consciousness…. I wonder if that is what death is like.

The surgical wound was quite large, but I was disappointed that I could not see what had been cut out.

After being discharged, I had to go back to the hospital. I had to put on the tape to seal the wound, but it was too much trouble and I forgot to take the medicine. I regret that I didn't take the medicine to make the wound heal faster. I did hear that sun exposure was not good, so I took protective measures. With bandanas and chokers and such. I was told to be careful because the hormones make you gain weight, but I gained weight anyway.

5. Recurrence

The doctor had said, "It will be all right if you remove it," so I thought that if I took the cancer out, I would no longer be a cancer patient. But I had to have another surgery. I don't know if it was because of recurrence or if part of the original cancer that couldn't be removed had grown. The cancer was found the day after my coming-of-age ceremony. Even at that time, I wasn't particularly surprised, but I thought, *what a hassle*. I don't remember what happened and why I was transferred to my current hospital. I think the surgery happened right away. It all turned out just as my mother had feared.

The hospital I transferred to was small and crowded because it was a specialty hospital. I started going to this Tokyo hospital from Fukushima, and the mornings were early and tiring, but by this time I didn’t care about the waiting time or the long travel time anymore.

Actually, there were times when I was irritated.

For the second surgery, while I was still conscious, they put in a ureteral tube and a tube through my nose. I remember that the nurse was very beautiful. But the nasal tube didn’t go in, and tears and snot and everything that could come out of my face was coming out. It was harder than after the surgery.

In the hospital room before the surgery, my grandmother turned toward me and put her hands together in prayer. *How embarrassing. Seriously, stop,* I thought, and took a picture.

When I woke up from the anesthesia, this time, the IV needle didn’t go in, again causing tremendous trouble for the nurses. 2 or 3 nurses took turns, and it was the first time I had a needle stuck in me like that. I remember feeling sorry. Apparently, the nurse was apologizing the whole time.

The surgery involved a large lymphatic incision, so I had a wound that went all the way down to my ear. But at the time, I didn’t understand what kind of surgery it was. The wound would not heal, and after I was discharged from the hospital, I became impatient when fluid began to flow from my neck. I was rushed from Fukushima to a hospital in Tokyo.

My hands and feet also became stiff. I noticed this in the bathroom. My heels rose on their own and I could not stand up, perhaps because I was straining my legs without knowing it. I think this was caused by the second surgery.

I think the food at the hospital was good. After the surgery, I chatted a bit with the person who was in the same hospital room as me and received ice cream and sweets from them. Even expensive Haagen-Dazs.

I don’t remember anything about the isotope treatment. I don’t even know what to try to remember. I just remember that I had a younger cousin at home, so I was hesitant to go home right away because I was worried about the potential harmful exposure for them. I rented a room at a temple through a friend of mine.

6. Now

Ever since I found out I was sick, I felt that the prefectural health survey existed because they cared about the health of the people in this prefecture. I even thought it was something to be thankful for. I didn’t know if it was the national government or the prefecture, but I thought, *heck, that’s great*.

I see on the news that more and more people are being found to have thyroid cancer. I would be one of them. But the news just says it’s due to ‘overdiagnosis.’ So then, what was all the screening for? What happens to the feeling of being even a little grateful? It’s disappointing, even though I refused the screening twice myself. I have mixed feelings.

Recently I relapsed again, and there was talk of a third surgery. I have bad feelings about it, but if anything, I feel worse that I keep burdening my mother.

I’ve always been someone who easily forgets to take medicine, and now I have to keep taking meds forever. Taking medicine didn’t used to be part of my daily routine, but now it is. I think it will take me a little longer to get used to it.

Vague anxiety. I can’t even think about the future. The present, the future— it’s really bad, in fact.

But I’m glad it was me who got sick and not my relatives or friends. I think it would have been harder if a friend or family member had gotten the disease.

I still worry about my friends. The carefree kids I used to play with. I should be thinking about marriage and having kids soon, but I don’t think I’ve gotten over the fear of getting thyroid cancer again.

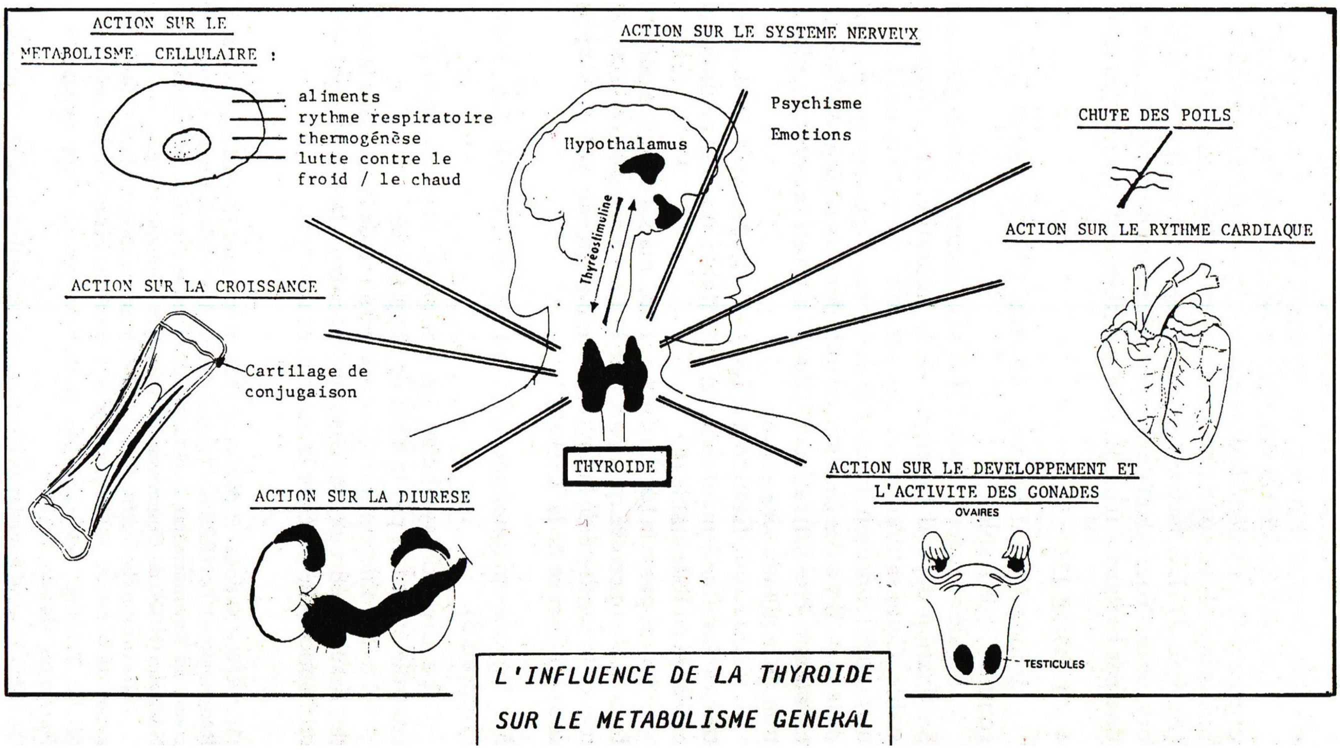
And to all the judges, I am glad that it was not your child that was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. I would like to tell the judges that there are more than 300 people and their families who are anxious now and will continue to be so in the future. I hope that the current situation will change, if only a little.”.

- Voir aussi : là, là, là, là.

Quelques rappels thyroïde

(anegeo)

● <u>In</u> Fauconnier, 1988, "Après Tchernobyl : Observations médicales en Haute-Corse", in Actes du Colloque "Nucléaire, Santé-Sécurité", Cons. Géné. Tarn et Garonne.



L'INFLUENCE DE LA THYROIDE SUR LE METABOLISME GENERAL

"La thyroïde synthétise les hormones thyroïdiennes (T3, T4), le contrôle étant fait par la TSH de l'hypophyse.

La thyroïde joue un rôle essentiel au stade fœtal dans la maturation des tissus cérébraux, des tissus pulmonaires, dans la morphogenèse et la croissance (elle accélère la croissance osseuse).

Chez l'enfant elle a un rôle important dans l'ossification et la croissance.

Chez l'adulte, la thyroïde joue également un rôle très important. Elle régularise le métabolisme des glucides, des lipides, des protéines. Elle a un effet diurétique et une action sur la thermorégulation. Elle a une action sur le système nerveux. La thyroïde agit sur le cœur, sur le rythme cardiaque, sur le transit intestinal, sur le système pileux."

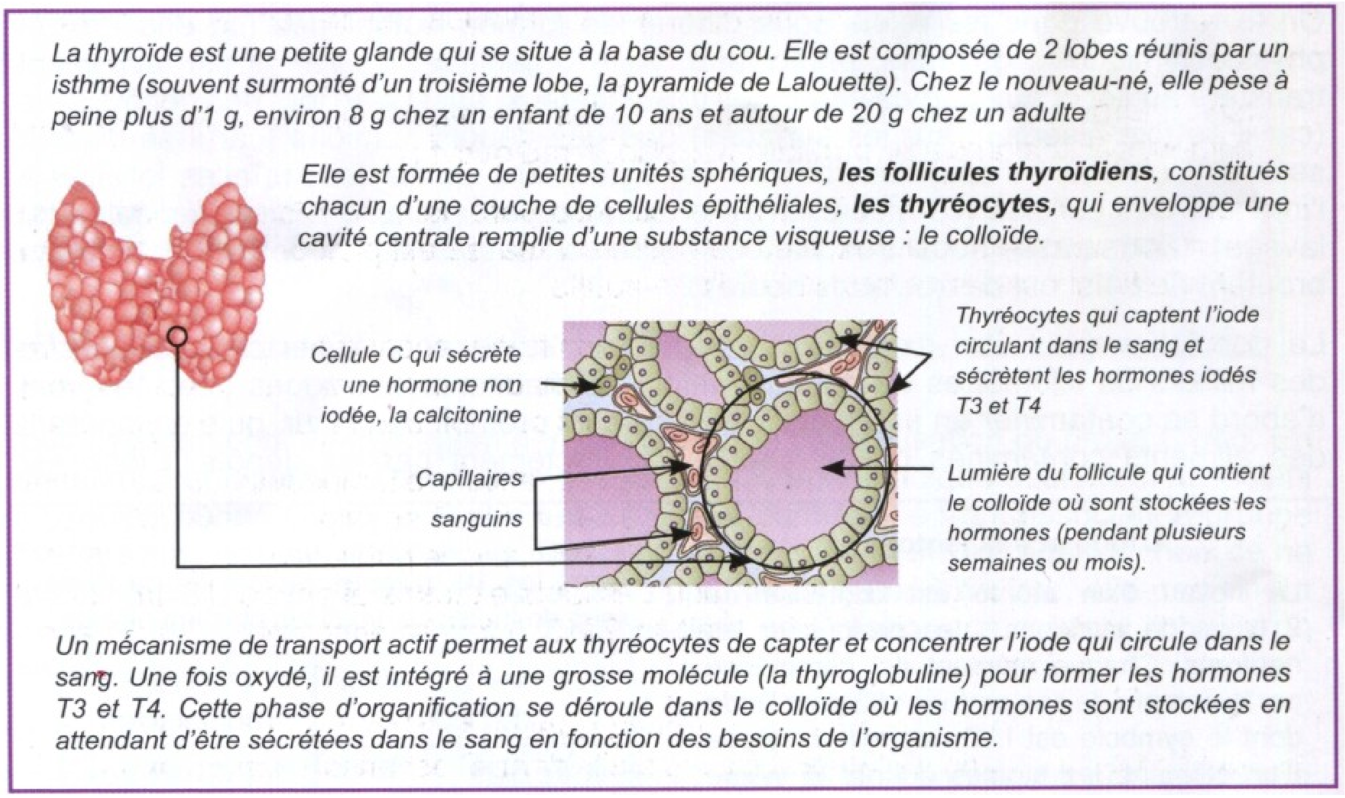
"Le taux de fixation de l'iode 131 est d'environ 25% si l'alimentation est habituellement riche en iode stable, de 75% au moins si elle est carencée en iode stable.

L'iode passe la barrière placentaire, mais il n'est fixé par la thyroïde fœtale et concentré qu'à partir de la 12ème semaine. A cette date commence la synthèse de la thyroxine, qui augmente vers la 20ème semaine sous l'influence de la TSH."

● <u>in</u> Trait d'Union CriiRad (revue adhèrent-e-s) n°86, sept. 2020 :

"L'iode sert en effet à fabriquer les hormones thyroïdiennes iodées qui régulent le métabolisme de base de l'organisme. Il s'agit de la tri-iodothyronine et de la thyroxine, également nommées T3 et T4 car elles contiennent respectivement 3 et 4 atomes d'iode. Les besoins journaliers sont d'environ 150 µg pour un adulte. Ils sont accrus pendant la grossesse et l'allaitement (≈ 200 µg). Une carence prolongée peut être à l'origine d'un goître, la thyroïde augmentant de volume pour tenter de compenser le déficit. Chez le fœtus ou le nourrisson, les hormones jouent un rôle essentiel dans la maturation du système nerveux (d'où le risque de crétinisme en cas de déficit), l'ossification et la croissance des os longs (d'où le risque de nanisme disharmonieux).

Les hormones T3 et T4 sont synthétisées et stockées dans la thyroïde, ce qui explique la forte concentration de l'iode dans cette petite glande : 90 % de tout l'iode présent dans l'organisme. Si l'iode est radioactif;, le mécanisme est le même, entraînant une irradiation intense de cet organe très radiosensible."



La thyroïde est une petite glande qui se situe à la base du cou. Elle est composée de 2 lobes réunis par un isthme (souvent surmonté d'un troisième lobe, la pyramide de Lalouette). Chez le nouveau-né, elle pèse à peine plus d'1 g, environ 8 g chez un enfant de 10 ans et autour de 20 g chez un adulte

Elle est formée de petites unités sphériques, ***les follicules thyroïdiens****, constitués chacun d'une couche de cellules épithéliales,* ***les thyréocytes****, qui enveloppe une cavité centrale remplie d'une substance visqueuse : le colloïde.*

Cellule C qui sécrète une hormone non iodée, la calcitonine

Capillaires sanguins

Thyréocytes qui captent l'iode circulant dans le sang et sécrètent les hormones iodés T3 et T4

Lumière du follicule qui contient le colloïde où sont stockées les hormones (pendant plusieurs semaines ou mois).

Un mécanisme de transport actif permet aux thyréocytes de capter et concentrer l'iode qui circule dans le sang. Une fois oxydé, il est intégré à une grosse molécule (la thyroglobuline) pour former les hormones T3 et T4. Cette phase d'organification se déroule dans le colloïde où les hormones sont stockées en attendant d'être sécrétées dans le sang en fonction des besoins de l'organisme.

- Chiffres gouvernementaux Belarus et ukrainiens (s'arrêtant à 2004) :

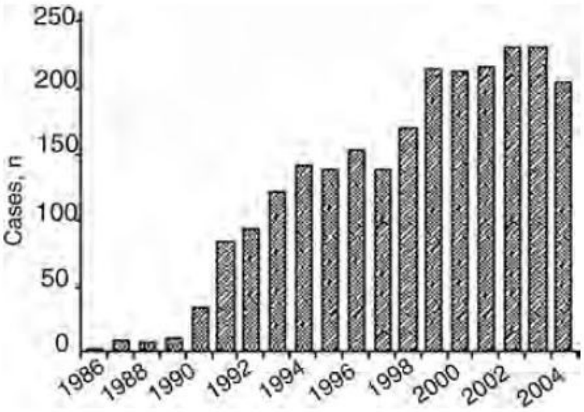


Figure 6.6. Primary thyroid cancer morbidity among those age 0 to 18 years in 1986 (National Belarussian Report, 2006: fig. 4.2).

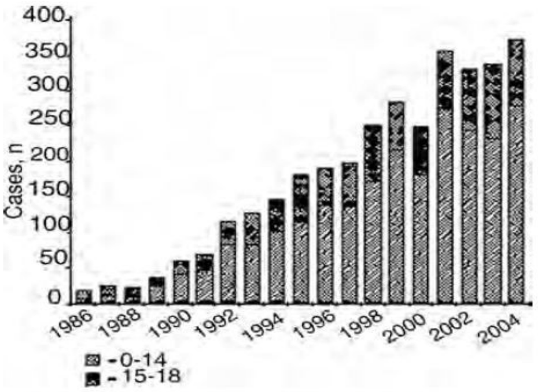
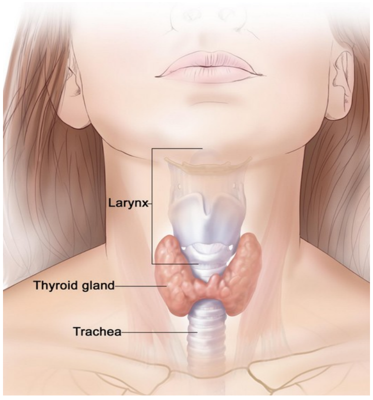


Figure 6.8. Number of thyroid cancer cases in Ukraine among persons who were 0 to 18 years of age at the time of the meltdown (National Ukrainian Report, 2006: fig. 5.2).

Avant :



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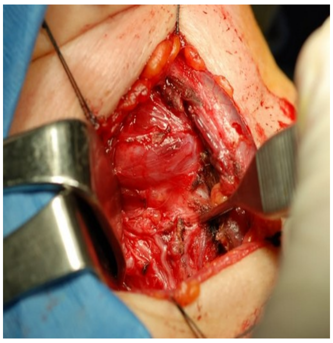

Physician Assistant Forum, by HeadNeckPA