

## RESEARCH AT KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON

*NutraSweet Information Centre, 3 August 1999*

On 3 August 1999, the announcement of a research project which would investigate allegations that there is a link between aspartame and brain tumours received widespread media coverage. The research is being funded from money granted by the National Lotteries Charities Board to a charity called the Samantha Dickson Research Trust and will be undertaken at King's College in London. NutraSweet AG, the company which markets NutraSweet brand aspartame in Europe, issued the following statement to co-incide with the announcement:

NutraSweet AG, welcomes the study which is to be conducted at King's College, London into the allegation that there is a link between aspartame and brain tumours. There is already an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence which confirms the safety of aspartame, but scare-mongers have continued to claim that aspartame is linked to brain tumours. We have no doubt that provided the study is well-designed and well-conducted, it will show that there is no such link. The study will therefore provide a further opportunity to put these groundless rumours to rest.

It is physiologically impossible for aspartame to cause brain tumours because it never enters the blood stream and thus cannot travel to essential organs, including the brain. Aspartame is digested to three components (two amino acids - aspartic acid and phenylalanine - and a tiny amount of the organic compound methanol) all of which are found in much larger amounts in common foods such as milk, meat and fruits and vegetables. After digestion, aspartame itself is no longer present. The body handles these elements in the same way, regardless of their source. The allegation that aspartame may be linked to brain tumours overlooks this basic fact and thus has the potential to create unfounded fears and anxieties.

Allegations about aspartame and brain tumors were examined and dismissed by scientists and regulatory agencies around the world as recently as in 1997. These agencies include the United States Food & Drug Administration, the United Kingdom Department of Health's Committee on Carcinogenicity, the European Commission's Scientific Committee on Food, the Australia New Zealand Health Authority, The Swedish Food Authority and the Conseil Supérieur d'Hygiène Publique de France.

Hans Heezen, vice president of NutraSweet AG, said, "Although we will be glad to have yet more evidence to add to the wealth of data which already exists to demonstrate aspartame's safety, it seems that the money which has been allocated could be more usefully directed to other research projects".