

PRESS RELEASE

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FOOD STANDARD AGENCY MESSAGE ON VITAMINS AND MINERALS DECREED AS IRRESPONSIBLE AND MISLEADING BY MAJOR EUROPEAN HEALTH ALLIANCE SCIENTISTS

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has today released its highly controversial report by its Expert Group on Vitamins and Minerals (EVM). The report aims to provide the Government's definitive view on 'upper safe levels' of vitamins and minerals, which, along with other nutrients, have been rapidly gaining popularity as increasing numbers of people recognise the difficulty of obtaining adequate nutrition in the diet alone.

The Alliance for Natural Health (ANH), which represents a wide range of innovative supplement suppliers, complementary practitioners and consumers around Europe, has many serious concerns both about the report as well as the accompanying message. The key issues are outlined below.

Irresponsible message

The ANH argues that the message given by the FSA that taking vitamins and minerals "may have irreversible harmful effects" and "can cause cancer" is highly irresponsible and misleading.

Coupled with this, the FSA has issued its intention to ban a number of ingredients widely available in food supplements, including all boron and silicon compounds. ANH scientists say these bans are ill informed and not based on solid science.

Dr Robert Verkerk, Executive Director of the ANH says:

"The message given to by the FSA today could cause many people who are deficient in key nutrients to stop taking supplements. The bans on some nutrients like boron and silicon are senseless and give consumers completely the wrong message. Even the FSA admits these minerals are unlikely to cause any harm."

FSA employ bias and flawed science

The scientists in the EVM who are responsible for the report have all, except for a single case, declared interests in the pharmaceutical industry which is directly threatened by the growing use of food supplements. The basic tenet of this emerging industry is that lack of key micronutrients in our so called "balanced diet" is having a hugely negative impact on our health. Dr Verkerk claims that much of the science used to back up the report is seriously flawed.

The EVM issued its draft report through the FSA last August and invited consultation. Feedback was received from 103 sources mainly representing individuals (40), academics (20), complementary health practitioners (12) and wholesalers/retailers (12). **The ANH Expert**

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Committee's stinging critique of the FSA report revealed the EVM's flawed approach which included misinterpretation and omission of specific and well-known research. Dr Verkerk concludes that "It is clear from today's report that the majority of this feedback has simply been ignored outright by the FSA."

FSA's message contradicts recent research

Contrary to the bald assertion of Sir John Krebs, chair of the FSA that "you can get all the nutrients you need from a balanced diet", **there is a growing body of scientific research which points to the need for supplementation given that it is increasingly difficult to obtain all the nutrients required for optimum health from the diet alone.** In June 2002, after a review of some 400 research studies, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reversed its long standing stance against supplements stating "Most people do not consume an optimal amount of all vitamins by diet alone.....it appears prudent for all adults to take vitamin supplements."

There is also clear epidemiological evidence that people with a high plasma concentration of **vitamin E** are less at risk from cardiovascular disease and further evidence that high intakes of beta-carotene are associated with lower incidence of lung, prostate, and other cancers.

There is strong evidence that high dose **Vitamin C supplementation** is more effective at suppressing HIV than AZT. A nine-year study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* showed that the mortality risk of those who supplement with higher doses of Vitamins C and E was reduced by 42% compared with those who did not.

FSA plans to transpose European Directive

The FSA report has been released just two months before the Food Standard Agency plans to transpose the Food Supplements Directive which was passed, despite massive opposition from vitamin consumers and other interest groups, into European law in June 2002. This Directive will effectively ban over 200 safe and effective mineral and vitamin ingredients widely available in nutritional supplements in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and other countries around the world. It will also limit the amounts of nutrients allowed, using some of the same science used by the FSA's EVM group. Not only that, but it also includes a gagging Article which bans any advertising stating or implying that "a balanced and varied diet cannot provide appropriate quantities of nutrients in general". This is despite the fact there is hard scientific evidence to the contrary. The Alliance for Natural Health is proposing to challenge this Directive.

Says Dr Robert Verkerk:

"This Directive, if accepted into EU member state laws, will have the effect of killing off innovation in the nutritional supplement industry over a period of years. Many of the safest and best absorbed forms of nutrients will be banned, allowing only low doses of simple, cheap, synthetic or inorganic forms which form the mainstay of vitamin & mineral products sold by the drugs companies. Millions of consumers and complementary practitioners around Europe will be hit very hard and denied access to many safe

supplements by this senseless Directive unless it can be stopped or substantially modified”.

ENDS.

For further comments and enquiries please contact:

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: List of organisations supporting Alliance for Natural Health

Appendix 2: Letter to the Sunday Times, 6 May 2003

Appendix 3: Executive summary and link to ANH Expert Committee’s response to the EVM Draft report

APPENDIX 1

List of organisations supporting the Alliance for Natural Health

Complementary Health Associations

British Association of Complementary Medicine (UK): www.bcma.co.uk
British Association of Nutritional Therapists (UK): www.bant.org.uk
British Society for Allergy Environmental and Nutritional Medicine (UK): www.bsae nm.org
Complementary Medical Association (UK): www.the-cma.org.uk
Guild of Complementary Practitioners (UK): www.gcpnet.com
Institute of Complementary Practitioners (UK): www.icmedicine.co.uk
Näringsmedicinska Terapeutförbundets (Sweden): www.nmtf.y.se
Committee for Alternative Medicine/KAM (Sweden): www.kam.se
Dansk Forening af Medicinske Urteterapeuter (Denmark): Tel. +45 3393 6162
Landsorganisationen Natursundhedsraadet (Denmark): Tel. +45 4828 8700

Other Industry Associations

Irish Health Trade Association: www.ihta.org
Irish Association of Health Stores: Tel. +353 1 287 6301

Innovative Supplement Companies

Metagenics: www.metagenics.com
Nature's Plus: www.naturesplus.com
Neways International: www.neways.co.uk
Nutri-Link: Tel. 01626 205405
Diva Diet: www.diva-diet.com
UltraLife Ltd: www.ultralife.uk.com

Health Freedom and Consumer Organisations

La Leva di Archimede (Italy): www.laleva.cc
MayDay (Denmark): www.mayday-info.dk
World Health Freedom Foundation (Netherlands): home.planet.nl/~holtj019/index.html
Health Freedom Movement (UK): www.healthfreedommovement.com
Campaign for Truth in Medicine (UK): campaignfortruth.com/home.htm
Union Nationale des Associations Citoyennes de Sante (UNACS) (France):
<http://ase.ouvaton.org/UNACS.htm>
International Advocates for Health Freedom (USA): www.iahf.com
American Association of Health Freedom (AAHA): www.apma.net

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APPENDIX 2

Letter to the Editor of the Sunday Times, sent 6 May 2003

**The Editor, The Sunday Times, 1 Pennington Street, Wapping, London E1 9XW,
United Kingdom.**

Sir

Jonathan Leake's article entitled "Health risk warning over high doses of vitamin pills" (Sunday Times, London, May 4th 2003) demonstrates a truly startling ignorance of the facts.

Far from poisoning themselves, the consistency of evidence in the scientific literature clearly shows that individuals who consume nutritional supplements have a lower risk of contracting serious disease, a position which has now been taken by two of the world's two leading medical journals.

The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), for example, recently reversed its long-standing anti-vitamin policy by stating that "it appears prudent for all adults to take vitamin supplements" (JAMA. Vitamins for Chronic Disease Prevention in Adults. 2002;287:3127-3129). Similarly, the April 9, 1998 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine featured an article entitled "Eat Right and Take a Multivitamin" that was based on a succession of positive studies showing the disease-prevention benefits resulting from the consumption of nutritional supplements.

The truth is that nutritional supplements are both safe and effective, and there are now countless thousands of published research studies to prove this. A study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition in August 1996, for example, showed that over a nine-year period, people who consumed higher dose vitamin C and E supplements reduced their mortality risk by 42%. Similarly, a 1992 UCLA study (Epidemiology (1992; 3:3, pp. 194-202)) reported that men who took supplemental vitamin C lived 6 years longer than those who merely consumed the recommended daily allowance of 60 mg a day. This study, which assessed more than 11,000 participants over a 10-year time period, showed that supplemental vitamin C intake extended average life span and reduced mortality from cardiovascular disease by 42%.

The UK Food Standards Agency's claim that supplements are useless in warding off illness or improving health is demonstrably untrue. An article published in the December 25, 1996 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) showed that 200 mcg of supplemental selenium a day reduced overall cancer mortality by 50% in humans compared to a placebo group not receiving supplemental selenium. Likewise, data from the Nurses' Health Study conducted at the Harvard Medical School showed that long-term supplementation with folic acid reduces the risk of colon cancer in women by 75%. (Annals of Internal Medicine (1998; 129:517-524)). The authors of this study expressly stated that folic acid obtained from supplements had a stronger protective effect against colon cancer than folic acid consumed in the diet.

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Mainstream medicine has historically ridiculed vitamin C supplementation. Nevertheless, research conducted by Dr. Raxit Jariwalla, head of Immunodeficiency Research at the Linus Pauling Institute of Science and Medicine in 1990 showed that vitamin C is more effective in suppressing HIV in infected human cells than the AIDS drug AZT (Proc Natl Acad Sci 1990;87:7245-7249). Jariwalla showed that both vitamin C and AZT can block the infection of new cells, but AZT, unlike vitamin C, has no effect on virus production in cells which are already chronically infected. Vitamin C alone was 99 per cent effective in inactivating the virus. Around 10 grams of vitamin C a day halved virus activity, while twice as much antiviral protection was achieved by combining vitamin C with the amino acid N-acetyl-cysteine. Jariwalla's research has now been replicated by many other researchers.

Despite all of the above, Government agencies and the orthodox medical profession continue to preach that dosages above the RDA are both unnecessary and dangerous. Their message, however, is in stark contrast to the facts. The RDA's are not, and were never intended to be, a measure of safety. The world renowned pharmacist and clinical nutritionist Ross Pelton RPh, PhD, CCN has described the RDA's as the nutritional equivalent of the minimum wage. The RDA's are merely the levels of nutrient intake that are necessary to prevent human beings from developing outright nutritional deficiency diseases, such as scurvy, beri-beri, pellagra or rickets, and have nothing at all to do with the promotion of optimum health.

Unfortunately however, due to the huge circulation of the The Sunday Times, the net result of Jonathan Leake's article will be the unnecessary and premature deaths of large numbers of people who will perish from illnesses that are now known to be preventable by the proper use of nutritional supplements.

Irresponsible and uninformed journalism of this nature should have no place in a newspaper with the esteemed history of the Sunday Times, and Jonathan Leake's grossly ignorant statements plumb new depths of journalistic inaccuracy. His article claims that "people taking vitamin supplements often suffered more diseases than those who went without" and "there is no need for ordinary healthy people to take food supplements", both of which statements are demonstrably false.

I strongly urge you therefore to consider printing a correction, and your readers to investigate the true facts for themselves.

Sincerely and respectfully

Paul Anthony Taylor, UK

(Full address supplied)

APPENDIX 3

Executive Summary of ANH Expert Committee response to EVM Draft Consultation Document, November 2002

Link to full document [Response by the Expert Committee of ANH on the draft report of the Expert Group on Vitamins and Minerals (EVM)]: www.alliance-natural-health.org/index.cfm?action=archive&page=1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report represents the response of the Expert Committee of the Alliance for Natural Health¹ (ANH) to the Expert Group on Minerals and Vitamins (EVM) Draft Report Safe Upper Levels of Vitamins and Minerals released in August 2002.
2. The report contains a general critique of the risk assessment methodology employed by the EVM as well as more detailed examination of the sections concerning Vitamin B6, β -carotene, Vitamin D and Vitamin C. Recommendations to the EVM / FSA are also provided.
3. Serious omissions and errors of interpretation have been made and these, in the view of the ANH Expert Committee, are so substantial as to invalidate the risk assessment and conclusions drawn by the EVM.
4. General methodological problems include failure to:
 - Include relevant published studies;
 - Refer to adverse event data;
 - Consult adequately with experts in nutritional medicine;
 - Appropriately interpret animal studies;
 - Consider the effects of combinations of nutrients;
 - Take adequately into account variations in susceptibility across different population sub-groups;
 - Consider the effects of declining nutritional quality of diets;
 - Consider the effects of increased exposure to environmental toxins which should be counteracted by increased antioxidant intakes.
5. With regard to the EVM's risk assessment of Vitamin B6, the EVM has ignored key data and continued to misrepresent other data, some of it widely discredited, in order to justify an Upper Safe Level (USL) of 10 mg / day. The EVM also does not appear to have adequately responded to the recommendations made in 1998 by the Select Committee on Agriculture.

¹ Refer to www.alliance-natural-health.org for background information.

6. The EVM's review of β -carotene ignored key data and drew on studies, which are open to a range of interpretations, on particularly vulnerable groups (notably smokers and asbestos workers) to formulate a USL for the entire population. A better approach for public health would be to recommend contraindications on labels for specified vulnerable groups.
7. There are very serious flaws in the EVM risk assessment of Vitamin D which could have serious consequences on susceptible groups, especially non-white members of the population, and the young and elderly, particularly in winter.
8. In undertaking the risk assessment of Vitamin C, the EVM has ignored a very substantial literature on 'high dose' usage, alone and in combination with other nutrients. The EVM specifies side effects associated with intakes of the vitamin exceeding 1 g / day which are not substantiated with evidence.
9. There is a clear conflict of interests in the membership of the EVM, with 58% of the members declaring pharmaceutical interests.
10. Recommendations are provided by the ANH Expert Committee (Section 4.3) which include the need for development of new models of nutrient safety and optimum nutrient intake and supplementation, taking into account all relevant data and knowledge.