

Food supplements and herbal remedies by far the safest substances consumed by UK citizens

Official figures show risk of death from natural healthcare is less than 1 in 10 million

The UK-based, international campaign group, the Alliance for Natural Health International (ANH-Intl), today releases figures showing that food supplements are the safest substances regularly consumed by UK citizens.

Both food supplements and herbal remedies are in the 'supersafe' category of individual risk – meaning risk of death from their consumption is less than 1 in 10 million.

ANH-Intl executive and scientific director, Robert Verkerk PhD, hailed the figures as shedding new light on the vexed question of natural healthcare's safety. *"These figures tell us not only what activities an individual is most or least likely to die from, but also what the relative risks of various activities are to society as a whole. It puts some real perspective on the actual risk of death posed by food supplements and herbal remedies at a time when governments are clamping down because they tell us they're dangerous."*

Commenting on the UK data, Verkerk added, *"When compared with the risk of taking food supplements, an individual is around 900 times more likely to die from food poisoning and nearly 300,000 times more likely to die from a preventable medical injury during a spell in a UK hospital. The latter is on a par with the risk of death from active military service in Iraq or Afghanistan."*

According to Dr Verkerk, the new figures should help to pressurise UK and European authorities to reduce regulatory burdens on natural health products. *"Governments justify the increasingly elaborate and restrictive new laws affecting natural health products on grounds of public safety",* said Verkerk. *"They argue that reducing consumer access to food supplements and herbal remedies, with the consequent negative impacts on small businesses manufacturing, distributing and selling such products, is in society's interest. But the evidence is simply not there – where are the bodies?"*

Also, adverse reactions to pharmaceutical drugs are 62,000 times more likely to kill a UK citizen than taking a food supplement, and 7,750 times more likely than herbal remedies.

While the ANH-Intl makes clear that the data include only risk of acute death, rather than the risk of death from chronic, long-term exposure, or the risk of sublethal side effects, the overall pattern of risk from various activities continues to show that food supplements are by far the safest group of substances consumed by humans. Accordingly, the campaign group argues, in line with the good governance policies supported by the British and a number of other European governments, the available data can justify only a light-touch approach to the regulation of natural health products.

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NOTES FOR THE EDITOR

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Alliance for Natural Health International (ANH-Intl) is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to protecting and promoting natural and sustainable healthcare using the tools of 'good science' and 'good law'. It is an international alliance of consumers, practitioners, doctors, scientists and lawyers, as well as specialist natural health enterprises, all with a common goal of optimising human health using, as far as possible, approaches that work with, rather than against, nature. Since the organisation was founded by sustainability scientist, Robert Verkerk PhD in 2002, the organization has campaigned to protect the right of individuals to maintain their health through natural means. The World Health Organization (WHO), and other leading health authorities, have confirmed that the major burdens on healthcare systems the world over are now caused by largely preventable, chronic diseases, notably heart disease, cancer, diabetes, obesity and osteoporosis. In turn, scientific evidence is unequivocal that it is the nature and quality of an individual's diet, ample physical activity and appropriate lifestyle choices, rather than new drugs, that are central to reducing society's burden from these diseases.