

Truth In Labeling In the Nutritional Industry Chances Are Good That Your Patient Is Not Getting What They Think

Is It Really In The Bottle?

Everywhere you look there is exciting new research on the efficacy of nutritional supplements. Unfortunately, the average consumer does not realize that evidence seems to come out monthly showing nutritional products do not always meet label claims. It is shocking to learn that, in the advanced society in which we live, so many nutritional products do not meet their label claims. In fact, many recent studies show that most of the nutritional products tested did not completely meet label claims. Buyer beware.

Study: Only 2 of 13 Met Label Claims

In a recently published study done at the Pharmacy School at the University of Maryland, 32 bottles of chondroitin sulfate (used for arthritis and joint conditions) were purchased at pharmacies and health food stores. Only 2 of the products met label claims. In fact 14 of the 32 bottles purchased contained 10% or less of label claim! It was also found that even the most expensive products did not meet label claims. What were the buyer's chances of getting a good product when only 2 of 32 products met their label claim?¹

Study: Less than 30% Of Label Claims Met

Another published study evaluated 51 antioxidant products purchased through mail order catalogues and health food stores. Less than 30% of all antioxidant enzyme label claims were met. What is even more shocking is that 7 of the 51 products showed no antioxidant enzyme activity at all.²

Study: 10% Of Products Tested Had No Measurable Amounts of Echinacea

Yet another recently published study tested 59 Echinacea-only products that were purchased in the Denver, Colorado area. The testing found that **10% of all products tested contained no measurable amount of Echinacea phytochemicals.** The Echinacea species found in each product was consistent with the label claim in only 52% of the samples. Of the 21 products that were labeled as being standardized, only 43% met the quality standard designated on the label.³

What if you gave your patient one of the 10% of products that contained no measurable amount of Echinacea phytochemicals? How can you dose with products where only 52% met label claims and only 43% of the products that were "standardized" met label claim?

If you think all of these are exceptions to the norm, think again. Recently one of the Chiropractic colleges sent a bromelain product in to be tested for activity. The product had no milk clotting activity (a standard assay for bromelain activity).

Bacteria, Mold, Heavy Metal Contamination

Even if a product does meet label claims, how can you know if it has the **biological** properties that you want for your patients? How can you know if it is the **part** of the plant or even the exact species that has been shown most effective? If these shocking things are true, then what about bacteria, mold, or heavy metal contamination.

At a recent International College of Integrative Medicine seminar, James Short, MD, showed slides of off-shore manufacturing plants and the crowd of health care professionals cringed to think of all the bacteria and mold that raw materials are processed and packaged in. Sure the manufacturer gets the product in respectable containers, clean and safely sealed. But the conditions before it reaches the manufacturer's hands are unknown even to the supplier who sells the raw materials.

Dr. Short compared the heavy metals content in parts per million of 11 glucosamine products. The Cumulative Toxic Metal Profile ranged from 10 parts per million to 2100 PPM. These are huge differences and may not

make a difference to a healthy person short term but over a long period can add to an already toxic load. Imagine giving the 2100 PPM product to someone already burdened with heavy metals. It could be the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back.

Russian Roulette

An article by Kerry Boone in a recent Townsend Letter emphasizes the difficulty patients have in buying quality nutritional supplements. "About 15 years ago in my practice, when I told my patients that I was recommending they take Echinacea, they would look at me blankly and say "What's that?" Now they say: "I'm already taking Echinacea!" Many are surprised by my answer which is typically: "No, you're not!" This survey underlines that anyone self-prescribing Echinacea is playing Russian roulette with their health and often wasting their money. This situation is even more problematical than the above study suggests because, in my view, many Echinacea products contain the wrong part of the plant, inadequate doses or are standardized to the wrong marker phytochemicals"⁴

Find A Good Manufacturer

There is only one sure way of buying nutritional or herbal supplements. Do the research and find a manufacturer that tests every raw material that comes into its doors. It is surprising, but most nutritional supplement manufacturing companies do not test raw materials they get from suppliers. They receive assays from the supplier that they rely upon. The studies listed above prove this to be an ineffective measure of quality. Most supplement manufacturers don't have the personnel, technical knowledge or physical capacity to test the raw materials they receive. They simply encapsulate or tablet the materials and put them into bottles.

Biotics Is Different

Biotics Research is different. Biotics has literally invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to build and staff a Phytochemistry lab where their scientists have developed several hundred tests to determine if the raw materials they purchase have the activity levels necessary to put into the products. If the activity levels are not in the products they are shipped back to the supplier who most likely repackages it and sells it to another manufacturer who does not have the capacity to test raw materials. Biotics also checks for the above mentioned heavy metals, and checks for bacteria and appropriate dissolution of tablets and capsules.

Clearly the company one chooses to manufacture their patient's products should not be taken lightly. Like I said, Buyer beware.

1. Adebowale A, Cox C, Liang Z, Eddington N. Analysis of Glucosamine and Chondroitin Sulfate Content in Marketed Products and the Caco-2 Permeability of Chondroitin Sulfate Raw Materials, JANA Spring 2000 Vol. 3, No. 1, 37-44.
2. Bucci L, Klenda B, Stiles J, Sparks W. Truth in Labeling For Antioxidant Enzyme Products, Survey of Label Claims and Product Potencies, Board of Nutrition, Palmer College of Chiropractic 1989, Daveport IA.
3. Gilroy CM, Steiner JF, Byers T, Shapiro H, Georgian H. Echinacea and Truth in Labeling. Arch Intern Med 2003; 163(6) 699-704.
4. Boone K. Phytotherapy Review and Commentary. Townsend Letter for Doctors and Patients, June 2003 43-45.