

**Supplement Regulation:
Who's Behind It, and Why Should You Oppose It?**
by Brian W. Vaszily

Let's make sure that all vitamin and herbal supplements are clinically proven to do what they claim, and that they're safe, before they reach the consumer. Let's ensure that their ingredients are closely monitored, and that their labels and advertisements tell the truth and nothing but, so that their consumption can be based on informed and confident decisions.

What pretty ideals. Pretty enough, in fact, for a host of politicians and governments, and the pharmaceutical corporations that control them, to hide a considerably more ugly agenda behind.

Right now a war is being fought over the regulation of supplements, with the various battles at different stages in countries across the globe. The European Union already passed its Food Supplements Directive in July of 2002, framing it on the principle that supplements should be proven safe and effective in the same manner as pharmaceuticals. The UK did not immediately implement this directive, but will do so come the end of this month. Australia, Canada, New Zealand and a host of other nations are involved in their own battles, and here in the U.S. Senator Dick Durbin's proposed "*Dietary Supplement Safety Act of 2003*," one of the first shots in what will undoubtedly become a mounting campaign.

In general, the claim behind these bills and directives supporting tighter (and tighter and tighter) restrictions on supplements is that they will make the world a safer place for us, the consumers. Yeah, and so would military occupation of our towns and cities. In reality, it will have a polar effect on our health and safety. And it will be chilling.

Keeping You on the Motherland

On a routine basis, Cubans attempt to escape their homeland on boats bound for U.S. shores. The ocean waters are certainly not safe, and there are rarely any guarantees waiting for them here. Nonetheless, the potential, the possibilities, are a far better option than the dangerously flawed regime they are trying to leave behind.

This is an apt metaphor in this situation. Because if one thing is certain it is this: the conventional healthcare system, our 'Cuba', is seriously diseased. It is dominated by industries who are motivated by profit and who therefore foster whatever will most increase their profits, your health be damned. For example, processed food is far cheaper to produce, deliver and store than much healthier whole foods, and so its processed foods that are dumped en masse into our supermarkets, restaurants and brains. And prescription drugs that merely treat symptoms versus prevent or cure the underlying causes are a whole

lot more profitable because, well, when they keep you coming back for more and more treatment, they've made a customer for life.

Most people, meanwhile, have been brainwashed by this conventional healthcare regime. They don't even realize their daily habits like eating are the primary part of their healthcare, and so it's quite easy for their habits and assumptions to be manipulated by the regime. Only when they get sick or overweight does their perception of healthcare, fostered by the pharmaceutical companies and others on that side of the regime, kick in: they will go to the doctor to get a prescription to "save" them. And these days, in almost 70% of all patient visits, physicians do indeed give them the drugs they crave. But if that doesn't work, if things get serious or seriously inconvenient, they move on to surgery.

Of course, most prescription drugs and surgeries, reflecting conventional healthcare as a whole, have nothing to do with prevention and addressing the causes of illness -- they're all about merely treating symptoms so people can move on with their unhealthy lifestyles and get more symptoms that need treating. It's great for repeat business.

Some people, however, are aware of the deadly downward spiral of the conventional healthcare system. They are refugees from an oppressive system, to be blunt about it, seeking better alternatives to prevent and cure illness, and live longer. And here is the key point of the matter that's caused this recent surge in opposition to supplements: their numbers are increasing dramatically, and they are finding those better alternatives.

Between 1997 and 2001, there was a 15% increase in sales of vitamin/mineral supplements. In 2002, the overall market for the alternatives to prescription drugs, processed and fast food, and surgery -- that is, natural/organic foods, dietary supplements and other natural products -- was \$37 billion.

Those numbers, that attempt to escape from conventional healthcare's stranglehold, is what is behind the recent worldwide war being waged on the leader among alternatives, supplements, at over \$17 billion annually. And it's those dictators at the top of conventional medicine, such as the pharmaceutical companies and the governments they own, driving this war. You see, all these alternates like supplements are actually getting people to believe they can prevent illness and avoid trips to doctors' offices, and it's starting to make a dent in their mega-profits, and threatens to make a much bigger dent.

They want to blockade your passage to potentially better shores and force you to stay in their Cuba. They'll put it in pretty terms of course, try to package it as something else like "safety," but that's what they're trying to do, and already in Europe, apparently succeeding in doing.

Let the Deadly Dictators Do the Dictating?

Thomas Moore, a senior fellow in health policy at the George Washington University Medical Center, estimates that prescription drugs -- those reviewed and approved by the FDA -- contribute to 100,000 U.S. deaths each year. One prominent reason for this that I'll visit in an upcoming article is that the entire research and approval process for new drugs is a hoax -- in short, drug makers now pay private for-profit companies to do the clinical studies establishing safety, and the drug companies have a major say in what is and is not reported. Meanwhile, who knows how many deaths they indirectly contribute to by veering people toward an over-dependency on their quick "fixes" and away from a preventative and curative approach to health?

On another front, the overweight/obesity epidemic, fed by other giants profiting heartily on their thrones in the healthcare motherland, is now directly linked to 300,000 deaths per year.

Sure, everybody's "*gotta' go sometime*," but the numbers above -- only a very partial list, mind you -- are far too many going far too soon because they are trapped in the conventional health paradigm. Meanwhile, even Senator Dick Durbin, in his 03/26/03 press release promoting his Dietary Supplement Safety Act, states that "*scientific reports have linked ephedra and similar dietary supplements to 117 deaths and more than 17,000 other health related problems.*"

You do the math. In fact, go ahead and play devil's advocate by assuming that the number of deaths resulting from conventional health are overblown -- perhaps it's only a couple hundred thousand yearly total -- while those from supplements are too conservative -- perhaps it's actually several hundred yearly total. And then do the maths. Where does the real problem that needs addressing reside?

It is precisely those at the heart of this problem that want to "*regulate*" supplements. Pardon me for stepping out of the party line, but why would I possibly trust them to make the supplement industry "*safe and effective*" when I see the monster they've created with conventional healthcare? Why would you?

So What Should You Be Swallowing?

None of this is to say, "*So trust everything the supplement makers tell you and consume, consume, consume!*" There are a lot of exaggerated claims, inconsistent ingredients between supposedly like products, and other confusion surrounding supplements. I'm sure you wish you could walk into any old store, or log onto any Web site, and know for certain that when an herbal claimed it could help prevent disease, restore youth, and repel rude people, those claims would be backed by solid clinical evidence. But you can't.

For that matter, I'm sure you wish you could trust the big businesses and governments to fairly and honestly test vitamins and herbals so we could make more informed and confident decisions in this respect. But then you learn things like this: a major study undertaken to discredit the herbal St. John's wart in 2001 received "*unrestricted funding*"

from the pharmaceutical company Pfizer. St. John's wort, an anti-depressant, has sales of over \$400 million per year, cutting a niche into the profit of Pfizer's prescription anti-depressant Zoloft, and Pfizer doesn't like to lose profit. It's not the first or last time a supplement was discredited in an "*independent*" study that received major pharmaceutical company dollars. Of course, such knowledge (and there's a lot more of it to be had) entirely shoots down any trust in the conventional healthcare establishment.

And so all that's left is reality. And reality is, you must trust your judgment more than any other person or institution when it comes to your health. That means doing whatever you feel is necessary to trust a supplement enough to try it -- researching its claims and source, or finding a source you trust to recommend the proper supplements to you.

To conclude, there are two choices today: the main choice, the conventional healthcare paradigm, and the alternatives, which include supplements. The main choice, being rather deadly, is really no choice at all. Meanwhile, some of these alternatives are indeed pure nonsense, others are questionable, and some have already been proven as sound and worthwhile. But the point is, we all have the capacity, and at least some of us still have the legal ability, to choose from among these alternatives.

The bills and directives across the world to "*regulate*" supplements are being pushed by the same powers-that-be that turned conventional healthcare into a sick joke for their own greedy ends. With "*regulation*," they would be the ones controlling the alternatives... and so go the alternatives.

Or to put it back into the Cuban metaphor, it's as if Fidel Castro himself announced to all those trying to escape his oppressive regime that he will now be running a refugee ferryboat service to the shores of Florida. All aboard? Me, I'll take my chances swimming. www.mercola.com (provides a free newsletter)