



# Bulletin Board

News, information and comment

The voice of  
the natural health  
industry



## Vitamin D – not so boring after all!

I'm always rather troubled when I hear people in our industry saying that recent legislation has driven out our ability to innovate. I guess what they mean is that they would like a free hand to launch new nutrients, or new compounds, like we used to in the past. However, scientifically speaking, it seems to me very unlikely that there are any major 'new' nutrients to be discovered. And whilst I accept that some innovation is possible in the presentation of existing nutrients, these are relatively modest advances compared to the fantastic choice of ingredients we already have.

So I think that the best innovation we can aim for as an industry is in the delivery of compelling, balanced and relevant information about individual nutrients and the fantastic health benefits they can bring to our consumers.

Take vitamin D as an example. A few years ago this was possibly one of



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the most boring nutrients which only made an appearance in multivitamins or in cod liver oil. Its most interesting features were that it is 'fat soluble', can be made in the skin and can prevent rickets – none of which propelled it to stardom!

But now look at it – it's headline news, even with GPs, and its reputation, quite rightly, continues to grow. In fact it's given our industry a great boost, and what I love about this is that the one thing that didn't change through all of the excitement was the actual nutrient itself – it's still just vitamin D3, the same good

old vitamin D3 we've known about for decades.

Well, I'm happy to admit that in no way did I predict the rise of vitamin D to 'hero' status. So I'm going to try to predict the next blockbuster, and for me the choice is easy: magnesium. As with vitamin D we know that magnesium is involved in hundreds of metabolic processes, it's well known that a large proportion of diets are deficient, and there's plenty of data on the health problems those deficiencies can cause. It's also a massive product in many EU countries, and even the EFSA-approved claims are great. So why can't I find a single credible, affordable magnesium product in my local health store? It's a mystery to me!

Anyway, when magnesium finally has its day, please remember where you heard it first! And if you'll allow me to spread my bets, I'll also put some money on vitamin B12 ...

## Getting the best from the HFMA

### HFMA AGM

On 1 June the HFMA hosted its 50th Annual Meeting of members, and the AGM featured a speech by HFMA chair Robert Taylor (pictured right) as well as a presentation by treasurer Tom Moses and a review of the previous year's activities by executive director Graham Keen.



Robert Taylor also announced and presented the HFMA's two prestigious annual awards: the Maurice Hanssen Award of Honour to David Adams for his years of dedication and hard work on behalf of the natural products industry; and the Health Journalist of the Year award to Alice Smellie, a highly acclaimed freelance health and lifestyle journalist predominantly writing for the *Daily Mail*.

Following the formal AGM proceedings there were fascinating presentations from Cicero Group's Tom Frackowiak & James Hughes on the potential EU Referendum outcomes and implications for this industry; Professor Ajit Lalvani, chair of infectious diseases and senior clinical research fellow at Imperial College London, who spoke on the policy of prevention and taking responsibility for one's own health; and finally James Plaskitt, a renowned political consultant, and former Labour MP and minister, about the continued need for a vibrant natural health industry and its role in preventing a reliance on more and more drug intervention.

### NEWS... WEIGHING IN ON NATURAL HEALTH

June and July mark the two months of the year when the national newspapers hail a range of new and exotic methods to lose weight. In the last two weeks alone, turmeric, amarasate, a Mediterranean diet, green tea, a low carb intake, oranges and grapes have all been revealed as the ultimate weight-loss food by multiple national newspapers and nutritional experts.

Whilst nationwide attention for natural products is always welcome, there is a real risk of diluting the health messages of certain products, which are backed by years of research, by reporting about them in a health category seen as 'faddy' or unsustainable.

As part of the HFMA's 50th anniversary initiatives, an expert

roundtable was held at which a group of 12 respected experts in human nutrition and public health, led by Professor Peter Aggett, discussed the future of micronutrient initiatives in the UK.

One of the most important factors identified for successful initiatives over the next 50 years was the application of robust research into ingredients and initiatives.

### NEWS... GREEN TEA

Recent news reports have stated that, amongst several other health benefits including the lowering of cholesterol and blood pressure, green tea could also treat acne.

For a month, participating women were given a green tea supplement – the equivalent of a daily glass of green tea. At the end of the study those in the placebo

group were found to have worse acne. The researchers at National Yang-Ming University, where the study was carried out, believe the results are due to an antioxidant in green tea, epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG), which is thought to have antibacterial effects.

Whilst claims such as this must be handled responsibly, it is reas-

suring to see national press making an effort to educate consumers on the all-important micronutrients needed for a healthy diet. A note of caution was the recent unwelcome news that the EC is considering referring green tea extracts to the European Food Safety Authority for a safety review under Article 8 of the Addition of Nutrients Regulation.