



Bulletin Board

News, information and comment

The voice of
the natural health
industry



Innovation – lifeblood of the Industry

Innovation and research have always been an important part of the specialist health industry. It is interesting to look back over the many years LanesHealth has been involved in the industry and see how the products have evolved over time.

During its long history, the specialist health industry has raised awareness of the value of vegetarian and vegan diets, wholemeal bread, muesli, polyunsaturated fats, and the role of vitamins and minerals in maintaining health. An innovative industry will always be at the forefront in the quest for new ideas, but as with all innovations, once established they become mainstream and consumers can pick them up with their weekly shop at one of the major supermarkets.

Manufacturers and retailers know that products will move through these cycles but there will always be niche products that are too specialist to make the transition, and these form the backbone of the specialist health industry. Mainstream retailers tend to



Janet Groves

is chairman of
LanesHealth and
an HFMA council
member

focus on well-known, established products as they cannot offer the information and advice needed by consumers seeking reassurance about new products.

Sadly, in recent years, innovation has been stymied by regulations that restrict claims, classify innovative new foods as 'novel' and require 30 years of traditional use for 'new' herbal medicines. However, the power of innovation cannot be halted, and manufacturers continue to review research, combine ingredients and look for new ways to present products. However, we need to be careful that in the search for innovative products we do not find ourselves on the wrong side of the law. Always buy from reputable suppliers who know and understand the

requirements and are able to offer high quality products or ingredients labelled appropriately.

When it comes to herbal medicines, although the herbs are traditional rather than innovative, manufacturers can modernize formulations, reduce daily dosages and replace sugar with film coating. There are also many opportunities for the specialist health industry to raise the profile of the sector. Many consumers are still unsure about the use of natural medicines and welcome the opportunity to discuss their needs with a knowledgeable retailer.

The search for hard hitting storylines in today's media continues to see attacks on the quality of products on the market, which I don't see coming to an end anytime soon. The result of such programmes is inevitably a loss of consumer confidence, and going forward we need to retain consumers' trust in the health store as a place to buy high quality, reliable products, backed with research and sold by trained personnel.

Getting the best from the HFMA

Media relationships

As the voice of the UK's natural health industry, the HFMA is often the first point of call when natural health issues are discussed and debated in the national media. To help maintain these important relationships, we regularly meet key health journalists to allow us to keep media contacts informed of developments within the industry. As well as providing positive news, these relationships help by providing the HFMA with an early warning of any negative articles planned, and an opportunity to provide balance. In addition, a new, updated daily news alert to all members logs key issues in national health news, tracks trends and promptly highlights both positive and negative stories.

NEWS ... 2016, AND STILL NO 5-A-DAY

In 2016, while across the globe we are in the grips of hundreds of life-altering health conditions, from ebola, to HIV, to diabetes and malnutrition, it is a sobering thought that the last two in that list are affecting the population at home in the United Kingdom.

According to the latest statistics from the National Charity Partnership, four in five adults fail to eat the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Unfortunately, this damning indictment of the British public's nutrition is nothing new, as an earlier HFMA Health of the Nation

Survey from back in 2010 found that as many as two-thirds of Brits – around 36 million people – are falling short of the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, and the statistics have not improved in subsequent surveys. As many will know, this guidance from the Department of Health is more of a low target, as the actual recommended daily intake for optimum health is more like nine portions of fruit and veg a day, rather than the more 'palatable' five.

It is ironic that in a nation where we have never been more

obese, yet remain nutritionally undernourished, there is now, more than ever, a strong argument for the importance of supplementation to provide vital nutritional support to those individuals struggling to meet their daily nutritional requirements for a range of reasons.

Although supplementation can never replace a healthy diet, it seems clear that better education regarding the importance of micronutrients for good health is needed for those still not following these fundamental health guidelines.

News...

Cinnamon for digestion

This month a study was released which showed that adding cinnamon to food could benefit our stomach health as the spice acts to lower the temperature of the stomach and aid digestion. The study, by the RMIT University School of Engineering, found that adding cinnamon seemed to lower the carbon dioxide levels in the stomach which in turn lowered the temperature of the body. The spice's antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties are also used in Chinese medicine to treat colds, indigestion and cramps.

Whilst claims such as this can be misinterpreted and must be handled responsibly, it is reassuring to see mainstream media outlets making an effort to educate consumers on the importance of diet.