



# Bulletin Board

News, information and comment

The voice of  
the natural health  
industry



## Oh my goodness, stop!

'Goodness', as well as 'nutritious' and 'healthy' are general health claims, however we may not be able to refer to products in this context as these terms are not on the EU Register of nutrition and health claims. Advertisements containing these words have recently been picked up by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) as non-compliant, but should we be able to use these general claims?

General health claims are an easy target for the ASA; the recent adjudication the word 'goodness' was due to this not appearing close to the advert showing 'contains vitamin B12'. So if the layout of the advert had been changed then would the advertisement have been allowed? Its adjudication of 'nutritious' and 'healthy', both implying that it will be good for you, were again not permitted because they were not accompanied by a specific authorized health claim.

The EU register of nutrition and health claims clearly states either what is an authorized health claim, and for which nutrient this applies, or those



**Rashda Ali**  
is general manager of  
Comvita and an HFMA  
council member

that are pending and on the on-hold health claims register, as is the case with many botanical claims. On-hold botanical claims add another level of confusion, just to cloud the problem further. As if we are not confused enough, botanical claims may have a limited time frame of use as they are currently under review. Businesses should seek further clarity if they are planning to use these in advertising, and the HFMA's CLEAR CHECK service can evaluate your advertisements and provide guidance and advice before going to print.

### Penalties

Non-compliance with the ASA and ignoring continuous requests for change has seen it impose fines.

This was the case with some liquid drops' advertised online to "amplify the immune system, remove the need for flu vaccinations, increase oxygen in the blood, reduce HIV infection levels and help fibromyalgia". The company involved was fined £7,000 plus costs.

### Advertising without a health claim

Advertising without health claims can also be tricky. Last year the ASA found in favour of Protein World's "beach body ready". The advert attracted controversy and a fair amount of adverse PR, as well as a signed petition of 32,000 people asking for the advert to be withdrawn. The advert passed the ASA test, but failed the consumer test and has not appeared on the London underground since. They do say there is no such thing as bad PR!

What will be in your next advert?

*'https://www.asa.org.uk/News-resources/Media-Centre/2016/ASA-welcomes-successful-prosecution-of-alternative-therapy-provider-following-misleading-advertising.aspx#.V6hnr2fmpcX*

## Getting the best from the HFMA

### New labelling and ad support service

As all industries face the pressure of a consumer base which is increasingly savvy about what's written on the pack as well as what's inside, it is increasingly important to ensure your labelling and advertising is of the highest standard, and adapted to meet evolving regulatory requirements.

HFMA members are given access to some of the best regulatory advisors in the industry through its CLEAR CHECK service, which provides a labelling and marketing 'compliance check' as part of each new application as well as a team to offer help and advice, from bringing a product to market, to managing changes brought by new regulations. Additionally, it will now offer a procedure for reporting non-compliant non-member companies to enforcement authorities, EU market-specific advice and tailored training.

## NEWS... THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCE

With a regular stream of confusing and varied headlines both hailing and denouncing natural health products every week, it has become almost impossible for consumers to differentiate between trusted public health advice, healthy eating trends, and corporate-backed research initiatives.

A prime example of this confusion came from the *BMJ* recently, which claimed that multivitamin and mineral supplements for mums-to-be were a needless expense, and that simply improving the overall diet and taking folic acid and vitamin D would give mother and baby all the nutrients necessary for a healthy pregnancy.

Not only was the headline dangerous, announcing without context that women should stop taking pregnancy supplements, but the article in question referred to clinical intervention studies, rather than addressing the true picture of dietary intake in the UK, suggesting that only those in lower-income countries should worry about the risks of deficiency.

As we know, The National Diet and Nutrition Survey analysis highlights that a substantial proportion of women of child-bearing age are consuming inadequate amounts of micronutrients – such as iodine, calcium and iron – so it is misleading to suggest that lower-income

countries are the only populations which show evidence of the risks of deficiency.

The HFMA came to the industry's defence in the national media to reiterate that ideally we'd all get sufficient nutrients from a healthy diet, but for a large proportion of the population, and certain at-risk groups such as pregnant women, this is simply not the case. For these groups, the belief they can obtain all the nutrients necessary from the average UK diet poses a very real risk to the health of both mothers and their unborn children.

More than 150 national and regional media outlets cited the HFMA's statement.

## News...

### Spreading mixed messages

The big butter confusion continues to be reported by the mainstream media, as researchers debate the safety of saturated fats. The latest study, carried out by Harvard researchers, claims that butter does raise the risk of dying from heart disease after all.

The researchers found that out of the 120,000 adults who took part in the study, those who ate the most saturated fat were up to 8% more likely to die. The findings were reported a week after another study claimed that a tablespoon of butter made no impact on heart disease or strokes.