



bulletin board

If only it were that simple!

I receive many emails about what is going on in our industry, and I always make time to read the HFMA ones as they contain useful information and articles relevant to all of us in this industry. And if I have questions, there are experts on hand for me to speak to – for me, a great reason to be a member of the HFMA. This month's included rogue online retailers, CLEAR CHECK and Scientific & Technical advisor updates.

At a recent HFMA/BHMA seminar, the importance of the quality of both traditional herbal medicinal products and herbal/botanical food supplements was discussed in detail. The seminar covered the supply chain – from growing right through to the end customer. This joint initiative shows how important working together is. Key to all in our industry is the quality of raw materials that find their way into our food supplements as powders, capsules, foods or other dosage forms. The trend towards 'personal nutrition' is certainly going to change our landscape. The direct benefit this offers consumers is, to me, quite amazing. And technology is certainly a key to the success



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of this 'new' sector, through apps, phones and computers.

So in terms of product quality, how do we know – and how will consumers know – that we are getting what we expect? Laboratory technology could – and should – play a key part in this. Raw materials should of course be tested before use, and manufacturers should certainly have a protocol in place with their suppliers/contractors across the globe. Raw material suppliers should be doing their part too, as should distributors. Some will have in-house testing and many, like my company, will use third-party independent accredited laboratories.

You would think it stops there, as the result will probably show what is expected against a certificate of analysis the supplier has supplied with the material. However, what happens when you get conflicting

results through your own testing? Is this where the technology comes into play? Different methods could be used to test materials. The same laboratory, which has several facilities worldwide, could also be using a different test method at each site with differing results. Who is right and who is wrong?

We've found through experience that the method of analysis used by the supplier needs to be understood and replicated to ensure what is found against the certificate of analysis is correct. It does not stop there, as technology changes and there are more advances in science, so testing methods are improved upon. It does not necessarily mean the older method is wrong, it just means there is another, newer way to carry out the testing. If conflicting results are found then it is only right for an investigation to take place, although this can take time to resolve and is not an overnight answer.

The HFMA has experts to help if and when a question or query arises, not only with regard to technical matters but much, much more. As I stated in the title of this piece 'if only it were that simple'.

Getting the best from the HFMA

Always check the label

One of the invaluable benefits of HFMA membership is our CLEAR CHECK service. Encompassing copy, labelling, education, advertising and regulation, CLEAR CHECK can help you navigate the regulatory minefield in one of the world's most complex industries.

On 23 October, the HFMA hosted a CLEAR CHECK workshop which provided members and non-members alike with an opportunity to draw upon over 50 years of combined experience on offer on the day, to better understand what the service can offer and how to make the most effective use of it.

News ...

Memory-boosting plant power

Clinical trials have confirmed that pills derived from the South Asian *Bacopa monnieri* plant can improve memory power.

One study showed an extract of the plant improved working memory five-fold, while another found that volunteers who took a 300mg dose for 12 weeks showed significant improvements in visual information processing, learning rate, memory consolidation and information retention. The extract is currently under EU consideration for approval as a therapy for age-related memory decline.

So many of us will experience the devastating effect of memory-affecting disorders such as dementia, directly or indirectly, and advances such as these are hugely encouraging. The HFMA, as always, will champion this type of cutting-edge research to ensure the better health of the nation.

PROBIOTIC USE COULD CUT ANTIBIOTIC NEED

The rise of antibiotic resistance has been said to pose the biggest threat to public health, leading health officials worldwide to speak about the urgent need both for new strains of antibiotics to be discovered, and for preventative measures to be more widely encouraged.

The theory that taking probiotics can result in a diminished need for antibiotics is by

no means a new one, however recent research has found a 'surprisingly' clear correlation between probiotic intake and antibiotic reliance.

Researchers in the US, UK and Netherlands reviewed 12 studies on the health outcomes of infants and children who received a daily probiotic supplement, concluding that children who take a supple-

ment were 30% less likely to require antibiotics.

The study's lead author, Dr Daniel Merenstein of George Washington University, along with his colleagues at Cambridge and at the University of Utrecht, says the results offer exciting prospects as the medical community continues to grapple with the increasingly serious impact of antibiotic resistance.