



# bulletin board

## Support for self-care initiatives

As the NHS continues to face an array of financial issues, it is adopting a number of new initiatives to improve efficiencies and save money. One approach of particular interest to the natural products industry concerns reducing the routine prescribing of medicines for minor, short-term health conditions.

In total, medicines for 35 different conditions will no longer be routinely prescribed, with patients being encouraged to either get better by themselves or treat themselves with OTC remedies. Such medicines include treatments for coughs, colds, mild cystitis, hay fever, ear-wax, head lice and nappy rash.

This change in routine is being supported by the introduction of a regular e-newsletter from at least one healthcare platform, educating and promoting the use of OTC medicines and food supplements as well as offering lifestyle advice on diet and exercise.



**Janet Groves**

is chairman of Lanes Health and an HFMA council member

The most recent e-newsletter outlines the benefits of probiotics, the need for vitamin D and self-help treatments for stress. Whilst it does not recommend specific products, it encourages patients to take more personal responsibility for their health, empowering them to consider self-help options as an alternative to a surgery visit.

These are just a few NHS initiatives which clearly illustrate a policy aimed at saving costs and reducing patient reliance on the health service through education and engagement. They offer the specialist industry a unique opportunity to meet patient needs while supporting the NHS.

There are a wide range of natural licensed remedies available for these self-limiting conditions including treatments for colds and flu, cystitis, hay fever, stress and anxiety.

Education is vital in helping consumers identify effective treatments to ease symptoms, so it is important for manufacturers to work closely with specialist retailers to promote these products. Whether through window displays, POS, leaflets or posters, educational materials will help to provide support and reassurance to consumers.

The HFMA is working hard to support the industry through the secretariat for the Micronutrients and Health APPG which aims to raise awareness of some of the health challenges faced by society and the positive role that supplementation can play. This is the perfect opportunity for the industry to support the NHS and at the same time help build a healthier nation.

## Getting the best from the HFMA

HFMA membership comes with access to some of the best experts and advisers in the health foods industry who have assisted the HFMA and its members with a multitude of cases including health claim dossier preparation, legal interventions, understanding new regulations, consumer media enquiries and opening doors to key regulatory departments and officials. We also keep abreast of the industry landscape and key commentators through our news bulletins, ensuring we're as well placed as possible to build relationships with experts.

For more information visit: <https://www.hfma.co.uk/membership/what-the-hfma-provides/>

## IS 2019 THE YEAR OF THE VEGAN?

Veganuary 2019 was set to be the biggest yet, with record numbers of people pledging to follow a plant-based diet for the first month of the year, cutting out any animal by-products. The Veganuary organizers have dubbed 2019 the 'year of the vegan', with a staggering 14,000 sign-ups on a single day in December.

Given that throughout 2018 supermarkets frequently launched new ranges, vegan-dedicated restaurants and cafés opened UK-wide and the ethical, environmentally-friendly lifestyle choice was rarely out of the media, it's unsurprising that the take-up was so vast for this year. However,

while it's certainly an increasingly 'mainstream' diet, it is still met with regular criticism from various nutritionists for being too restrictive and indeed lacking in essential nutrients.

Wholefood animal produce such as organic meats, fish and eggs are among the most nutrient-dense foods you can include in your diet and therefore vegans can be at risk of a diet that is lacking in minerals and vitamins such as B12, iron, zinc, D and calcium.

Despite this, it is clear that general awareness around nutrition is improving year-on-year and there are now a plethora of brilliant resources online offering

tips on how to ensure your diet meets the recommended guidelines for nutrients if you are taking part in Veganuary, or indeed going full-time vegan. This represents an opportunity for the innovative producers and retailers within our industry to provide those vital nutrients needed for ever-emerging alternative diets and lifestyles.

Therefore, we hope that if 2019 truly is the 'year of the vegan', it will also be a year of increased public awareness around nutrition, seeing more people than ever taking an interest in ensuring that their diets are complete with the right vitamins and minerals.

## News ...

### New research backs up magnesium's regulating effect on vitamin D

In an interesting study reported in the December issue of *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, new research confirms that magnesium and vitamin D are, in fact, more closely connected than perhaps otherwise thought. Magnesium optimizes vitamin D status, increasing it by improving absorption levels in people with a deficiency, while simultaneously lowering it in people with high levels.

The discovery that these two nutrients are closely linked – and that magnesium can help normalize vitamin D levels – is further research-backed proof that many essential nutrients are interconnected and that we need to look at our entire nutritional intake for maintaining optimal health and avoiding the symptoms of certain deficiencies.