

Truth or Tabloid?

September 2005

☀ Headlines → This way to health

While articles promising the effects of the latest miracle food, including but not limited to any or all of the following, may make good reading...

increased metabolism and energy, quicker fat burn, increased stamina, strengthened immune systems, increased resistance to sickness and disease, healthier blood cells, improved circulation, healthier organs, faster healing, removal of chemicals/heavy metals, healthier skin, healthier and faster-growing hair and nails, balanced gastric juices, reduced colonic bacteria and refuse, increased nourishment in the colon from other types of food.

.....they are not a reliable reference for dietary intervention programs.

☀ Simply Supplements

Equally alluring are some of the claims attributed to dietary supplements sold in the USA....

promotes cardiovascular health, helps weight control, lowers glycemic response, enhances the immune system, improves gut health

....accompanied by the following disclaimer which must, by law (DSHEA), be displayed on the outer label or included in advertising material:

These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

(Then, why anyone would want to buy them?)

☀ Sales and Sales Spin

A handful of legitimate products dominate dollar volume in each sector of functional foods and dietary supplements (~ the old 20/80 rule: 20% of products generate 80% of dollar volume). As for miracle foods and superficial supplements, the sales cycle is short, lasting until consumer dissatisfaction catches up with weak or non-existent scientific underpinning.

☀ To Supplement or Not

The practice of complementing dietary patterns with nutrient supplements has been researched and debated by nutritional scientists for decades, usually along the dimensions of bioavailability, toxicity and bio-marker effects. Recently the medical profession entered the foray (wonders never cease), as reported in a July 2005 edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association:

"The identification, isolation, and purification of nutrients in the early 20th century raised the possibility that optimal health outcomes could be realized through nutrient supplementation [...] The most promising data in the area of nutrition and positive health outcomes relate to dietary patterns, not nutrient supplements. These data suggest that other factors in food or the relative presence of some foods and the absence of other foods are more important than the level of individual nutrients consumed. Finally, unknown are the implications on public health behavior of shifting emphasis away from food toward nutrient supplements. Notwithstanding the justification for targeting recommendations for nutrient supplements to certain segments of the population (eg, the elderly), there are insufficient data to justify an alteration in public health policy from one that emphasizes food and diet to one that emphasizes nutrient supplements. ff

☀ Some Web sites

<http://www.bfr.bund.de/cms5w/sixcms/detail.php/5962>

<http://jama.ama-assn.org/content/vol294/issue3/index.dtl>

© 2005 International Food Focus Ltd., 211 Carlton Street,
East Office, Toronto, ON M5A 2K9 T: 416-924-3266
F: 416-924-2726 E: focus@foodfocus.on.ca

Food Fax is archived @ our Web site <http://www.foodfocus.on.ca>