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Orthomolecular Medicine News Service, January 17, 2016

Supplement Bashing on PBS

Latest Hatchet-Job to Air Jan 19

by Andrew W. Saul, Editor

(OMNS, Jan 17, 2016) It may be time for some extra niacin. PBS FRONTLINE has advertised a program teaser for "Supplements and Safety" that proves, if nothing else, that yellow journalism still attracts viewers. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/supplements-and-safety/> Prepare to be presented with the same old anti-vitamin saws dressed up as sensational, breaking news. And here they are:

Legend Number One: "Supplements are unregulated!"

Not true. Supplements are indeed regulated. (Honestly, now: can you think of anything in this nation that the government doesn't regulate?) Specifically, at the US Food and Drug Administration's own website:

"FDA regulates both finished dietary supplement products and dietary ingredients."  
<http://www.fda.gov/Food/DietarySupplements/>

Legend Number Two: "Supplements are untested and unproven! They reach the market without being tested and without proof of safety and effectiveness!"

FDA states, again at its own website:

"Manufacturers and distributors of dietary supplements and dietary ingredients are prohibited from marketing products that are adulterated or misbranded. That means that these firms are responsible for evaluating the safety and labeling of their products before marketing. . . FDA is responsible for taking action against any adulterated or misbranded dietary supplement product after it reaches the market."

Legend Number Three: "With pharmaceuticals, it is different! FDA thoroughly tests drugs before they are marketed!"

Drug testing is done by the pharmaceutical companies, not the FDA. FDA reviews paperwork, not patients. FDA trusts the pharmaceutical industry to submit the truth. The number of civil lawsuit judgments and huge criminal fines levied against drug manufacturers for fraud tells the real story. Try an internet search for "pharmaceutical companies fraud" and see for yourself. Even Forbes has blushed at this.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/erikakelton/2013/07/29/is-big-pharma-addicted-to-fraud/#2715e4857a0b5599e8485fac> Deaths from a pharmaceutical drug eventually results in FDA pulling that drug from the market after FDA already approved it, based on what the drug companies told them.

And speaking of deaths, you will be offered the perennially popular

Legend Number Four: "Supplements are dangerous, even deadly!"

Truth is, there were zero deaths from any supplement in 2014, the most recent year for which national data has been analyzed. To read the entire report: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3109/15563650.2015.1102927> If you want our summaries: <http://orthomolecular.org/resources/omns/v12n01.shtml> and <http://orthomolecular.org/resources/omns/v12n02.shtml>

Since the best defense is a good offense, there is reason to believe that pharmaceutical industry interests are well served by casting aspersions absolutely anywhere but at themselves. And a competing industry makes a fine target. I hope Big Pharma made some really large pledges to PBS. The Frontline documentary looks to be as much an infomercial for them as it is an embarrassment for supporters of public television.

Previous negative PBS reporting on supplements has included this unintentionally humorous gem, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/thing-much-vitamins/> , where alarm is expressed that a popular vitamin drink "includes 120 percent of the recommended amount of Vitamin C, B6 and B12."

And no, I do not have it in for PBS. I have been a featured guest participant in an on-air pledge drive for a major PBS station. Fred Rogers' correspondence with me occupies an honored place in my office. I like public broadcasting. I do, however, have a problem with unnecessary suffering. Warning people away from the very nutrients they so badly need guarantees a lot of unnecessary suffering for a whole lot of people.

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