

## **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**

### **Press Release**

**Issued by: Alliance for Natural Health International**

**Date: 14 January 2010**

**Title: *“Proposed dose limits on vitamin supplements in Europe found to be scientifically flawed”***

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The European Commission (EC) has planned to use specific scientific risk analysis methods to limit maximum dosages of vitamins and minerals in food supplements since 2002.

Whilst it originally intended to issue proposals in 2007, a three-year delay has ensued owing largely to difficulties in achieving scientific consensus as to the precise methodologies to be deployed.

Once turned to law, the restrictions, commonly referred to as “maximum permitted levels” (MPLs), will affect products sold in all 27 Member States of the EU. However, the more liberal markets, notably the UK, Ireland, Holland and Sweden, will be most seriously affected.

Drs Robert Verkerk and Stephen Hickey’s scientific critique just published in the journal *Toxicology* devastates some of the main approaches under consideration by the EC and the European Safety Authority (EFSA). The authors have found that the over-precautionary approaches being considered would limit dosages to such an extent that in some cases levels in a single ‘junk’ meal would exceed those allowable in supplements on a daily basis. The authors compare typical nutrient intake based on the UK Food Standards Agency’s (FSA) healthy eating guideline and show that levels from a day’s worth of healthy eating would give rise to levels more than 10 or even 100 times greater than some of the maximum levels proposed.

The scientists argue forcibly that models used by the European authorities have not been validated against levels of vitamins and minerals known to be healthy.

In the UK, food supplements are consumed by around 40% of the population. Available empirical data, both from the UK and elsewhere, including from the USA where consumption levels are higher still, suggest that food supplements are considerably safer than conventional foods. In the USA, where detailed figures are available, some 76 million illnesses, 325,000 hospitalisations and 5,000 deaths occur annually as a result of consumption of normal foods. By comparison, almost no deaths occur in any year from food supplements, although where these have occurred, they tend to be related to children consuming iron tablets or choking.

It is expected that this timely and important scientific critique, which includes suggestions as to how methods might be improved, will influence the final version of the scientific methods used to impose maximum levels on food supplements.

# EDITOR'S NOTES

## About the article

The full reference to the 'Epub ahead of print' article is as follows:

Verkerk, R.H.J., Hickey, S., A critique of prevailing approaches to nutrient risk analysis pertaining to food supplements with specific reference to the European Union. *Toxicology* (2009), doi:[10.1016/j.tox.2009.12.017](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tox.2009.12.017)

The article can be accessed electronically from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tox.2009.12.017>

## About the lead author: Robert Verkerk BSc MSc DIC PhD

Dr Robert Verkerk is founder, executive and scientific director of ANH International. He has 29 years experience in the fields of agricultural, healthcare and environmental sustainability, having divided his work between academia, industry and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). After being awarded his Masters and doctorate degrees from Imperial College London, he continued working at the same institution as a post-doctoral research fellow for some 7 years. His interest in the sustainability of agricultural systems not reliant on chemical inputs drew him to the field of human nutrition and its use as a distinct healthcare strategy.

In 2002, in order to address Dr Verkerk's many concerns about current directions in global food production and healthcare, Robert founded the Alliance for Natural Health (ANH). The ANH has become a leading, international non-governmental organization working to help create rational scientific and legal frameworks in order to promote natural and sustainable systems of healthcare worldwide.

## About ANH International

[www.anhinternational.org](http://www.anhinternational.org)

The Alliance for Natural Health International (ANH-Intl) represents an international non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting natural and sustainable approaches to healthcare. It upholds that biologically compatible systems of healthcare, such as integrative medicine and functional medicine models, as well as many traditional healthcare systems that have evolved over millennia, are essential if sustainable systems of healthcare are to be developed. ANH-Intl considers that over-reliance on pharmaceutical drugs, a key characteristic of the dominant western medical model, is intrinsically unsustainable. ANH-Intl is working collaboratively with a wide range of scientists, lawyers, medical doctors, health practitioners, politicians and consumers, to help facilitate the development of scientific and legal frameworks appropriate to natural and sustainable healthcare.

## For more information about ANH regional work:

ANH-Europe: [www.anh-europe.org](http://www.anh-europe.org)

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