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A correction of misinformation regarding Herbalife

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Abstract

The authors of the subject article by Senadhi *et al* have misrepresented the safety and regulatory status of Herbalife's products. While we are very concerned with the unwarranted and unfavorable publicity that the inaccuracies listed could generate for Herbalife, we would welcome any inquiries that these authors may have to better clarify our commitment to the safety and quality of our products as has been demonstrated in part by our ability to establish positive relationships with regulatory authorities worldwide through continued cooperation and compliance. This letter clarifies the misinformation presented about Herbalife in the subject article.

Key words: Hepatitis; Drug-induced liver injury; Herbalife; Herbal; Dietary supplements

Core tip: The authors of the subject article by Senadhi *et al* have misrepresented the safety and regulatory status of Herbalife's products. Most importantly, the authors have misinformed the readership that Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has taken action against Herbalife for its known association with reports of liver injury. FDA has taken no action on the company for this reason or any other reasons to date.

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TO THE EDITOR

In an article published in the August 27, 2012 issue of the *World Journal of Hepatology*[1], the authors described a case of herb-induced hepatitis in a patient with human immunodeficiency virus. In the abstract and introduction of this article, the authors referred to their general opinion that herbal or over-the-counter supplements are unregulated, thus being unsafe and carrying potential risks that some of these products contain ingredients that may be hepatotoxic. To further this point, the authors stated that Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has taken regulatory actions against several companies that have been "known" to be associated with reported cases of liver injury. The authors used Herbalife and Hydroxycut as specific examples of such regulatory action. First of all, we would like to express our concern for the inappropriate reference that these authors have made regarding the safety and regulatory status of our products. FDA has had the opportunity to investigate Herbalife's products with full cooperation from the company, and no regulatory action has been taken against the company to date. This is not the case for Hydroxycut, which the manufacturer agreed to recall and reformulate in 2009 amidst growing safety concerns including FDA's consumer and health professional warning statements to stop the consumption of these products. Therefore, the authors' comparison between our product and Hydroxycut is inappropriate and completely unfounded. Secondly, the authors erroneously stated that Herbalife is a GNC product which is incorrect. Herbalife is a brand and not

a single product, and our products are sold directly to consumers through our distributor network and not purchased through any retail establishments, let alone GNC. Finally, the authors have cited an article[2] to support the aforementioned misinformation regarding Herbalife and this reference does not contain any data to support these statements. Furthermore, Herbalife formally rebutted the reference article[3] and the authors did not cite this information which is a biased representation of the information associated with Herbalife in the literature to date.

While we are very concerned with the unwarranted and unfavorable publicity that the inaccuracies listed above could generate for Herbalife, we would welcome any inquiries that these authors may have to better clarify our commitment to the safety and quality of our products as has been demonstrated in part by our ability to establish positive relationships with regulatory authorities worldwide through continued cooperation and compliance.

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