

ARE VITAMINS KILLING YOU?

My phone was ringing hot following the TV3 programme featuring Prof Rod Jackson on an anti-vitamin crusade.

I had been advised about this programme so thought I knew what to expect. Perhaps the biggest surprise for me was that TV3 would air such a biased antagonistic, inflammatory and wildly inaccurate programme. It turns out that TV3 did not make the documentary – they simply screened which I guess confirms that what we saw was little more than a party political broadcast from the Pharmaceutical Industry.

Prof Rod Jackson is well known for his controversial views. It was Jackson who stunned New Zealanders and many around the world by declaring Butter to be a poison saying it should be taxed like cigarettes (see attached newspaper article). Jackson made these comments in advance of a nationwide cholesterol testing programme being launched by the makers of Flora Pro-Activ cholesterol-lowering spread. Jackson is also known for controversial comments he made about Type 2 Diabetes.

Given the aggressively anti-vitamin position he took throughout the programme, one wonders if Prof Jackson has a major conflict of interest. He didn't tell us about his involvement with the promotion of a new 'Polypill' for heart disease (containing two drugs that deplete an essential nutrient and another linked to thousands of cases of abdominal bleeding). When telling us that vitamins can kill, Jackson also overlooked telling us that properly prescribed drugs are the third leading cause of death in the U.S. and other countries which have allowed pharmaceuticals to monopolise the way medicine is practiced.

It's really interesting to note that with more than 800 studies to choose from, only 67 studies were picked out. This suggests to me that there was a specific and pre-determined agenda. With Jackson stating that vitamins should be regulated as drugs this to me was more than a hint about what the agenda might have been. Thousands of New Zealanders marched in the streets to prevent a Trans Tasman Bill that would have seen this happen. Could it be that this programme was a first salvo in an attempt to re-ignite political interest in this?

Despite saying that vitamins kill people, Jackson made no attempt to support this with hard evidence. Where are the bodies? I have not been able to find any evidence that even one person has died as a result of taking vitamins.

Many of the studies that Jackson had on his 'list' examined patients with life threatening diseases who were already taking a cocktail of drugs. I am aware that some trials involving Vitamin E used the synthetic form dl Alpha Tocopherol. Vitamin E in nature has 8 parts. I take a full spectrum all natural form of Vitamin E which has all the tocopherols and the tocotrienols.

We were never told anything about the reference ranges that were being used for the programme so how could anyone make an informed decision about how 'elevated' Vitamin E levels were. One of the so called 'pill poppers' featured in the programme was found to have an elevated Vitamin C level. My reaction to this would have been – FANTASTIC that's what I was hoping to achieve. I know that I am using a form of the Vitamin that is well absorbed.

In summary I can only say that if anyone cares to look at the vast body of evidence which supports the use of nutritional supplements (thousands of studies) it would be very difficult to come to a conclusion that taking vitamins had anything other than a beneficial effect on the body – by preventing the onset of chronic illness and helping to offset the damage done by inescapable exposure to environmental toxins. Those who would try to present an argument to the contrary either haven't bothered to read the evidence or have another agenda.

I will certainly be continuing with my supplement protocol. Given that I have an ESR of 2 (a marker of inflammation) a level normally only associated with babies – a CRP of <1 (also a marker of inflammation) a PSA (prostate specific antigen) of 0.6 - blood pressure of 115/75 and a resting heart rate of 50, my vitamins don't seem to be doing me a lot of harm. Dr Donald Miller (*cardiac surgeon and Professor of Surgery at the University of Washington School of Medicine in Seattle*) is on the same page too (his article on this topic is very thought provoking).

Because there is no monopoly on knowledge the countless millions of us with access to the internet can no longer be fooled by those who would wish to perpetuate a medical model that is well past its use by date. I wonder how the likes of Prof Jackson would stack up in a debate with some of his peers who have a far more balanced view of how optimal health might be achieved?

John Appleton (October 2009)