

Behind the Attack on Alternative Medicine and the Natural Health Movement

By CT SUPPORT FUND

In medicine, we see the dominating power of big pharmaceutical corporations; spending millions to court doctors, influence research, (all once deemed unethical) all the while expanding the mechanistic model of the human body. Corporate support of medical schools seems to be turning physicians into sales representatives, winning trips for pushing one drug over another – James Redfield¹

In a free society we should have choice regarding health care. Modern medicine with all its innovations and advances does not have all the answers, which is why alternative and complementary medicine continues to flourish due to popular choice.

Unfortunately, powerful lobbies and special interests want to deny you these choices. Their tactics include putting pressure on individuals, businesses and organisations that offer treatment different from normal “accepted” practice. This includes medical doctors and holistic practitioners who use alternative therapies in their work.

The fight to defend your freedom of choice is heating up and taking action now - especially if you’re a consumer of alternative therapies - has become vitally important. This article will provide some background on what this fight is about and why it affects you.

Medical Industrial Complex

“The medical establishment has become a major threat to health,” states an article entitled ‘Too much medicine? Almost certainly’, recently published in the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ). This particular issue of the *BMJ* is well worth reading, devoted to exploring the question of whether “increasing medical inputs will at some point become counterproductive and produce more harm than good.”

The editorial even points a way forward away from the current medical regime in which, “people may increasingly take charge, more consciously weighing the costs and benefits of the ‘medicalisation’ of their lives. Armed with better information about the natural course of common conditions, they more judiciously assess the real value of medicine’s never ending regimen of tests and treatments.”²

The same issue of the *BMJ* makes the somewhat controversial points, which are significant admissions for a mainstream medical journal: “A lot of money can be made from healthy people who believe they are sick,” and further on, “the social construction of illness is being replaced by the

corporate construction of disease.” Also this: “A key strategy of the alliances [corporate interests] is to target the news media with stories designed to create fears about the condition or disease and draw attention to the latest treatment.”³

It would appear there is a lot of money to be made from disease - not from health.

The *New England Journal of Medicine* reports in 2003 there was, “a US\$6.5 billion dollar bill on covered drugs and biologic products; 75% of which went to doctors, primarily for specialities such as haematology, oncology, urology; including injections, infusions, drugs and medical devices.” The cost, of course, is paid by the taxpayer. The article goes on to state: “Expenditures for drugs have grown almost twice as rapidly as those for other health care services in recent years.”⁴

As consumers, we should be able to choose between mainstream medicine’s drugs pathway and one of a multitude of alternative healing and complimentary treatments on offer in our so-called democratic society.

People disillusioned with orthodox treatments are turning more toward complementary therapies, diverting more funds away from the pharmaceutical industries that monopolise orthodox treatments worldwide. They are losing billions dollars per year in Australia alone to complementary medicines over which they do not have absolute control (yet).

Dr. Andrew Weil says that in the United States, “30-40% of people [a comparable number to Australia] report seeing alternative practitioners, a number that represents billions of dollars. That’s enough money to make medical institutions take notice. Many are adding more holistic care options. They’re desperate. They can’t afford to lose their clientele.”⁵

But it’s enough money to make the medical industrial complex want more than just a piece of the action - they want to wrest control of complimentary medicine and integrate what they can of it into the ‘system’. And they have long term plans to achieve their goals.

Codex Alimentarius

A daunting international agreement of which many remain unaware is the Codex Alimentarius, a set of trade standards originally established to protect consumer health and fair practices in the food trade, but also incorporating guidelines for vitamin and mineral food supplements.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission was formed as a joint effort between the United Nations and the World Health Organisation (WHO) back in 1963. Today, it consists of delegates who overwhelmingly represent large multinational pharmaceutical companies and government regulating authorities including the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) in the US, and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in Australia.

The guidelines are now intended to control the sale of supplements and herbs and to regulate them as drugs to be manufactured solely by drug companies. In accordance with these guidelines, and at each successive Codex meeting, supplements are being slowly withdrawn from the public domain.^{6,7}

One of the Codex's main goals is total *harmonisation* of the food and drug laws of the world's nations to their standards. This is part of the free trade and privatisation agenda. According to Dr. Zoltan Rona, MD, a well known defender of health freedom in Canada, "the name of the game for Codex is to shift all remedies into the prescription category so they can be controlled exclusively by the medical monopoly and its bosses, the major pharmaceutical firms."

Codex is dominated by the largest pharmaceutical companies, and it is their profit interests that will determine - without any meaningful review - the health and safety of all of us. Ultimately, the radical measures being pursued by Codex will see the outlawing worldwide of all non-prescription vitamins and health products.

The Codex guidelines, which set the recommended daily intake levels of supplements, are gradually decreasing to a point so low as to make therapeutic or prophylactic doses of supplements impossible, and technically illegal.

One vitamin supplier in Scandinavia was pursued by police for supplying vitamin C tablets that exceeded 200mg. In other words, the amount of vitamin C contained in three oranges made this supplier a criminal. Further to that, possession of one popular supplement, DHEA, in Canada now attracts the same penalties as crack cocaine. The Canadian regulator is now empowered to classify any substance as a drug, even if it is a food that has been safely consumed for millions of years. They have the power to recall or remove it from the market.⁸

Germany and Norway have already complied fully by regulating all supplements and herbs as drugs. In a country with an age-old tradition of natural medicine, no one can freely access these products now. Vitamin C (above 200mg) is illegal, except by prescription and then only from a pharmaceutical company. But first you have to convince your doctor you need it.

The patenting of herbs and other plants is granting authority to multinationals to "safely" lock up herbs for sale and profit. This is being done in the name of "standardisation", another requirement of Codex. Patenting effectively grants not only sole rights to make or sell a product - in this case a natural "product" - but to actually own it. The ownership of a life form by an individual or corporation.

Australia signed the Codex agreement in 1992. There has already been a Federal police raid on a couple in northern NSW, who planting a Chinese herb in their garden to use as tea.⁹

The TGA is attempting to persuade New Zealand to “harmonise” to the same level as Australia, including the prohibition of any therapeutic claim made with respect to nutritional supplements, even where medical studies exist to support these claims. So far New Zealand has resisted, placing value on health freedom for its citizens. However, failure to “harmonise” with Codex standards will result in sanctions against governments by the World Trade Organisation.

The Pan Pharmaceutical “crisis”

Contrary to the impression created by the media hype, the recent Pan Pharmaceutical crisis in Australia confirms the safety of dietary supplements and alternative medicines as compared to drugs. When the dust settled, though, just one product from Pan, an over-the-counter travel sickness tablet, had caused harm. But the tarnish quickly spread to the supplement industry as a whole, as a blanket recall caused people to doubt not only the effectiveness of vitamins and supplements but their safety.

Many fear the Pan Pharmaceutical products recall was part of a very real conspiracy to undermine alternative medicine. Marcus Blackmore, chairman and managing director of Blackmore Ltd, was quoted in the *West Australian* as saying, “Where is the evidence that these products were ever harmful? It’s like the weapons of mass destruction. The Government just went ahead with what they wanted to do anyway.”¹⁰

Revealingly, TGA principal medical adviser Dr. John McEwen said Pan Pharmaceutical products were dangerous and therefore all “consumers should avoid taking their complementary or vitamin products”, however, “he stressed consumers should not stop taking prescription medicines or PBS pharmaceuticals.”¹¹

Campaigner Graham Williamson states: “It is abundantly clear that orthodox medicine is clutching at every straw in an attempt to label alternative medicines as dangerous... Modern medical science is quite simply attempting to mislead consumers because they realise their position is fundamentally unpopular and flagrantly undemocratic. They know they must falsely convince consumers that alternative medicines are dangerous if they are to have any hope of obtaining the legislative changes they are seeking.”¹²

Conspicuously absent from concerns about vitamin safety, however, was any discussion of the much greater dangers of prescription drugs.

On the same day the Pan Pharmaceutical recall began the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), on its Four Corners program, was screening

a program about the dangers of the antidepressant Seroxat, otherwise known as Aropax or Paxil.

One of the world's top selling antidepressants, Aropax has been reported to cause aggressiveness, hostility, violence, and suicidal behaviour. One patient had killed his wife, daughter, and granddaughter after taking two tablets of Paxil. This is in spite of the fact he had no history of violence or aggressive behaviour prior to taking Paxil. A subsequent court case, won by the family of the victim, revealed the manufacturer of the drug had concealed evidence of the dangers of Aropax for 15 years. The information was kept under lock and key. Astonishingly, although a doctor was permitted access to the information as a result of a court order, he was prevented from discussing or publicising his notes. This drug, which was *not* withdrawn by the TGA, attracted no official public warnings in Australia.¹³

Concerning adverse drug reactions, journalist Eve Hillary recently drew attention to the pro-drug bias of government regulators: "...incredibly, no large multi-national company has ever been shut down by a government regulator after one of its products has been recalled, even if deaths have occurred as a result of using the drug or chemical."¹⁴

Eve Hillary further states: "Media disinformation is issued directly from pharmaceutical company public relations departments on a daily basis through journalists and industry-sponsored doctors embedded in the media and other key positions."¹⁵

In June the *New York Times* reported that the Pharmaceuticals Research and Manufacturers of America would increase its lobbying budget by 23 per cent to US\$150 million (\$259 million) in the coming year. Its budget includes more than US\$2.5 million for such things as an "intellectual echo chamber of economists and thought leaders" (read journalists), and for the placement of articles by third parties and media relations consultants.

The agency also set aside US\$12.3 million to develop coalitions and strategic alliances with doctors, patients, universities and influential members of minority groups.

With this sort of money spilling into government hands, it will come as no surprise when the Dietary Supplement Safety Bill, currently being introduced in the US and backed by the pharmaceutical industry, is passed. The Bill will effectively medicalise the dietary supplement industry, force most manufacturers out of business, and allow a pharmaceutical takeover of the industry.

In the UK, the situation is no different. Journalists Antony Barnett and Mark Townsend have exposed the connections between science experts, leading drugs firms and government ministers, stating: "Dozens of the [UK] Government's most influential advisers on critical health and environmental issues have close links to biotech and drug corporations, according to a dossier of Whitehall documents obtained by *The Observer*... Many work as

consultants for the firms, own shares in the companies or enjoy lucrative research grants from them.”¹⁶

A Four Corners program which aired in Australia on February 19, 2001 exposed the pressure placed by the pharmaceutical industry on the Federal Government’s advisers. The program explored how the government overhauled the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC), whose job is to advise which drugs should be publicly subsidised. Billions of dollars in taxpayers’ money and industry turnover rest on the deliberations of this committee.

Reporter Liz Jackson detailed meetings and conversations which led ultimately to key committee members being dumped - members not in the pocket of the pharmaceutical companies. “They have a zero tolerance approach to people who criticise them,” said the drug companies’ public enemy number one, ex-committee member Professor David Henry.

Stand Up and Defend Freedom of Choice!

Hiding behind the guise of “protecting the consumer”, government bureaucrats and multinational corporations across the globe are moving to strengthen their grip on the “sickness management industry”. Is it coincidence that alternative health consumers on three continents are facing the same struggle?¹⁷

But while these combined forces try to push through their agenda, public support of and demand for, alternative therapies and products is on the increase across the globe - *despite* the extra cost for the consumer, *despite* the lack of media support, and *despite* having millions of doctors rubbish non-mainstream medicine every time they are asked about it. The support for alternative therapies and natural health products is on the increase *because of the results* experienced by consumers.

Thus, the campaign to kill the credibility of alternative therapies has failed. It now seems other ‘tactics’ are being employed to remove public access to these products and services, including restriction of product entry into countries, the outright removal of products from shelves and warehouses, and threats of legal action against strategically selected targets from within the natural health movement.

One such strategic target appears to be Jennie Burke and her company, Australian Biologics, against whom the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) have recently issued a writ.

This case will have severe and widespread ramifications for *all* manufacturers, distributors, retailers and practitioners involved in non-mainstream health products and services, both in Australia and overseas.

Jennie Burke, [Med Tech, M.D.(M.A.) Dip NSc, Dip M.H.], was convenor of three World Congresses on Cancer (1994, 1995, 1997). Doctors, medical

specialists and professors from all over the planet came to present and hear of the many successful alternatives to mainstream cancer treatment. Jennie, an internationally recognised expert in her field, is regularly asked to give presentations at prestigious congresses in Europe, the USA and China. Jennie is on several international advisory boards, including the International Cancer and Nutrition Society, and is a member of both the German and Austrian Societies of Oncology, the Medical Science Network UK, Médecins Sans Frontières, and Physicians for Human Rights. Australian Biologics is a private pathology laboratory, which primarily uses Live Blood Analysis via Darkfield Microscopy, as well as Thermography.

Unlike the giant pharmaceutical companies who spend billions per year to lobby, buy influence and market their products, the alternative health products/services industry is fragmented and uncoordinated both politically and legally. There is no effective or recognised body for businesses or organisations to turn to in this situation. Individuals and companies faced with this sort of scrutiny and legal challenge usually give in and comply to avoid court action beyond financial reach.

Jennie has decided to fight the action, but cannot do so without public support. If you are one of the many thousands of people touched by the work of Jennie Burke, and/or Australian Biologics, now is the time to email or post personal testimonials, plus any financial contribution you consider appropriate.

For more than 200 years mainstream medicine has tried to run alternative practitioners out of operation. It has sought to humiliate them, outlaw them, imprison them, and deny them publicity and research funds.

Ms Burke has been forced to sell her home to establish a fighting fund, and needs our support to avoid financial ruin as this case could drag on for years. Of course, it would be much easier to give up than risk financial ruin, but it is apparent we need to unite if we are to fight for our rights of health care choice, and prevent multinational monopoly of our herbs, vitamins and alternative therapies.

A petition requesting Australia rescind the Codex Agreement can be obtained through the Darwin Holistic Health Centre which also has a demonstration video called *Holistic Therapies*, available to help raise funds for the current legal battle threatening freedom of choice of health care in Australia. Donations are welcome. Please contact DHHC, GPO Box 824, Darwin, NT 0801, Ph: 08 8941 1699, fax 08 981 3446.

If you have ever wanted to do something to help ensure the future of alternative health products, services and therapies - now is the time. This is more than just another court case - this is *the* court case we need to win.

Jennie Burke/Australian Biologics Fighting Fund

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For more information on Australian Biologics, Jennie Burke, Live Blood Analysis, Thermography, the court case, and what else is at stake, visit the website at: www.australianbiologics.com.au

Footnotes:

1. 'Intuiting The Twelfth Insight', www.celestinevision.com
2. Moynihan R, Smith R., 'Too much medicine? Almost certainly', *BMJ* 324(7342):859-860, 2002
3. Moynihan R, Heath I, Henry D., 'Selling sickness: the pharmaceutical industry and disease mongering', *BMJ* 324(7342):886-890, 2002
4. Iglehart JK. Medicare and Drug Pricing. *NEJM* 348:16, 2003
5. www.family-friendly-fun.com/health/alternative/Andrew-Weil.htm
6. www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/codex
7. <http://ahha.org/codex.htm>
8. Eve Hillary, 'TGA Skeletons: WHO Privatised the Regulator?', www.achn.org.au/TGA1.pdf
9. Ibid.
10. *The West Australian*, June 30 2003
11. *The Australian*, 28 April, 2003, www.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,4057,6349938%5E2,00.html
12. www.holistichealthtopics.com
13. Ibid.
14. Eve Hillary, 'TGA Skeletons: WHO Privatised the Regulator?', www.achn.org.au/TGA1.pdf

15. Eve Hillary, **Health Betrayal**, Synergy Books 2003

16. *The Observer*, 13 July, 2003,
<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/politics/story/0,6903,997205,00.html>

17. Paragraphs in this section extracted from *Nexus* advertisement, August-September 2003 edition.

Compiled by the Complementary Therapies Fighting Fund 2003