

March 2021 Health Notes by Evelyn Ames *Don't Be a Pill and Fall for Supplement Pills*

An amusing but catchy way to start the March Health Notes is to highlight the February 14th Doonesbury comic strip. A couple of characters are watching a TV ad promoting Prevagen. Quotes from characters: (“anecdotal results may vary, but three out of four pharmacists recommend Prevagen and other products they carry.” “Ask your pharmacist if spending \$1,100 a year is right for you!” Last panel: “Are placebos right for us? I forget...” The main ingredient in Prevagen is a synthetic copy of the jellyfish protein called **apoeaquorin**. It is made entirely in a lab.

Having spent some time the last couple of weeks noting the many advertisements for supplements on television and scanning ads in the local newspaper and magazines, it is safe to say that there is nothing that escapes being promoted for young, middle aged, and older adults to enhance and improve the body and mind and to relieve or eliminate all sorts of health problems. The March Health Notes focuses on an illegal drug included in many dietary and other supplements.

A recent article in *Consumer Reports* brought attention to one particular drug (it is not legal or approved for use as a drug in the United States) that carries serious consequences. Ever hear of “tianeptine”? It is found in dietary and other types of supplements as well as a pain-killing type of substance. It appears to have effects similar to opioids (e.g., dulling pain and creating euphoria). Tianeptine is chemical that affects brain chemicals. It seems to affect mood when used in low doses. In higher doses, it works like an opioid and can cause addiction and other serious side effects such as withdrawal symptoms. It is reported that individuals who have overcome addiction to oxycodone and fentanyl and fell into use of tianeptine, develop addiction again! Tianeptine does not qualify as a dietary ingredient. It is not on the FDA GRAS list (generally recognized as safe). Dietary supplements containing tianeptine are adulterated substances under the FDC Act. Consumers Union reports that although the FDA is aware of several serious adverse reports associated with tianeptine, it has not acted to investigate the extent of various supplements that illegally include tianeptine. Supplements in the U.S. have not been tested for safety and effectiveness. Essentially any substance can be included without ever being tested for efficacy and safety. Removal occurs when serious adverse effects and deaths occur.

A search of the web (amazing what is shown on Amazon's web page when searching “tianeptine”) is illuminating! The following is a small listing: Nature Way Alive Max; Twinlab, Andrew lessman glutamine, L-Arginine Plus, Ageless Body Top Natural Antiaging, MA Labs' Vicaine, and Jack B Goods Outlet Store for its Tianaa Red, Tianaa White, and Tianaa Green products. Tianeptine is also sold under the brand names Tiannaa, Stablon and Coaxil and identified as an atypical antidepressant which is used mainly in the treatment of major depressive disorder, although it may also be used to treat anxiety, asthma, and irritable bowel syndrome. Other substances listed on the 2021 Military banned list include: Acacia Rigidula (green coffee bean extract +Energy), Aconite (wolfsbane, Homoeopathic, supposed to improve heart conditions), Aegelline OxyELITE Pro for weight loss and muscle bulk, Betaphine (Dexaprine, a stimulant), DMAA (Absolute Pump, amphetamine derivative) for nasal decongestion; BMPEA (Fastin-XR, possibly replace amphetamine).

“The most scientifically sound approach to keeping one's immune system healthy are habits that don't require you to buy pills or eat strange foods.” Research studies have shown that participants maintain healthy immune systems when they reduce both short-and long-term stress; get enough regular sleep; physically exercise from 30 to 45 minutes; and eat a variety of nutritional foods. “To boost immunity, forget magic pills” suggests Christie Aschwander. *Consumer Reports* highlighted a list of dietary supplements with “risky” ingredients: Fastin-xr methylsynephrine, Neuropil (piracetam), Noocamilon (picamilon), Green stinger (isopropyl octopamine), Anesthetized (phenibut), Milletov-x (dmha), Thermosculpt original (bmpea is a synthetic substitute for amphetamine), Adipropen ultra (dmaa, an amphetamine derivative) Sources: *CR Consumer Reports*, March 2021; [Military Banned Supplements List For 2021: 23 Banned Substances \(operationmilitarykids.org\) https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/boosting-your-immune-system/2021/01/29/256fd52c-3fc4-11eb-8db8-395dedaaa036_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/boosting-your-immune-system/2021/01/29/256fd52c-3fc4-11eb-8db8-395dedaaa036_story.html)

