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Doctor's Call to Limit Vitamin Supplement Access Is Dead Wrong

*Confuses grassroots opposition with "industry supporters"
and wrongly asks FDA to limit access to nutritional supplements*

Washington, DC (February 6, 2012) — In the January 25 online edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, an editorial by Pieter A. Cohen, MD, called for greater FDA control over vitamin and dietary supplements. At issue is a proposed set of regulations by US Food and Drug Administration that would drastically decrease the availability and increase the price of vitamins and dietary supplements for the millions of Americans who rely on them—despite widespread opposition from grassroots advocates, health practitioners, supplement companies, and Congress.

"In his analysis, Dr. Cohen woefully failed to face the facts of what these new regulations would do," stated Gretchen DuBeau, executive and legal director of the Alliance for Natural Health USA (ANH-USA). "Despite the lack of any proof of harm, or any problem with the nation's supply of vitamins or dietary supplements, Dr. Cohen says FDA should 'implement the [controversial nutritional supplement] law before a public health crisis forces it to do so.' This isn't simply an overreaction, it's a dangerous one."

ANH-USA finds it odd that Dr. Cohen believes FDA should divert its limited resources toward increased vitamin regulation despite a consistent record of safety, while overdoses from FDA-approved prescription drugs killed 37,500 people last year, exceeding the number of national traffic fatalities. DuBeau added, "FDA's own data found that there were 275,000 serious adverse events for prescription drugs, compared with just 600 for vitamin and dietary

supplements. The agency should dedicate its staff and resources to the products that are causing the most harm and killing more Americans than ever before.”

Moreover, Dr. Cohen incorrectly characterizes the hundreds of thousands of ANH-USA’s natural health grassroots supporters who contacted FDA in opposition to the agency’s supplement guidance as “industry supporters” espousing “industry pressure.” As DuBeau explained, “It is inaccurate to label people who believe in and use vitamin and dietary supplements as ‘industry supporters.’ ANH-USA submitted over 100,000 comments from our diverse membership in opposition to the FDA’s proposed new regulations. To refer to the outpouring of grassroots action as ‘industry pressure’ shows that Dr. Cohen does not have a firm grasp of the issue.”

ANH-USA recently reported that it is not only the public who oppose FDA’s new nutritional supplement regulations. Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Tom Harkin (D-IA) are the original drafters of the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994—the law that governs the regulation of vitamins and dietary supplements. The senators recently wrote to FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg to request that the agency withdraw its proposed new regulations, due in large part to the agency’s misinterpretation of congressional intent.

“Congress told FDA that the agency is not properly implementing regulation but is essentially creating new law, which is unconstitutional,” DuBeau concluded. “FDA can either work within existing law, or face serious congressional and legal challenges. Americans won’t allow their vitamins to be taken from them.”

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About the Alliance for Natural Health USA (ANH-USA) ▪ <http://anh-usa.org>

The Alliance for Natural Health USA is part of an international organization dedicated to promoting natural, sustainable healthcare through good science and good law. We protect the right of natural health practitioners to practice, and the right of consumers to choose the healthcare options and treatment modalities they prefer, including complementary and alternative medicine. As a membership-based organization, we unite consumers, practitioners, and industry to speak with a common voice and have worked since 1992 to shift the medical paradigm from an exclusive focus on surgery, drugs and other conventional techniques to an “integrative” approach incorporating food, dietary supplements and lifestyle changes.