

News story: GC collaborates in research about dangers in food supplements

Hidden ingredients in food supplements

Food supplements of herbal origin are now commonly used by many people as part of their personal healthcare regimens and there has been a tremendous growth in the supplies and sales of supplements. However, food supplements are at risk from contamination on a global scale with illegal ingredients.

According to a team of experts from Queen's University Belfast, Kingston University and the Government Chemist at LGC that included Emeritus Professor Duncan Burns, Dr Michael Walker and Professor Declan Naughton, many food supplements contain hidden pharmaceutical ingredients that could be causing serious health risks.

Their research, outlined in a peer-reviewed paper, found that over-the-counter supplements – commonly advertised to treat obesity and erectile dysfunction problems – are labelled as fully herbal but often include potentially dangerous pharmaceutical ingredients, which are not listed on the label.

Professor Burns, Queen's University, explained:

Our review looked at research from right across the globe and questioned the purity of herbal food supplements. We have found that these supplements are often not what customers think they are – they are being deceived into thinking they are getting health benefits from a natural product when actually they are taking a hidden drug.

These products are unlicensed medicines and many people are consuming large quantities without knowing the interactions with other supplements or medicines they may be taking. This is very dangerous and there can be severe side effects.

Health consequences

The research raises serious questions about the safety of slimming supplements (Sibutramine, withdrawn from license in 2010) and undeclared ingredients in erectile dysfunction supplements (Tadalafil, sulfoildenafil). These ingredients can react with other medications, for example those containing nitrates, and cause serious health problems.

Professor Burns noted:

This is a real issue as people suffering from conditions like diabetes, hyperlipidemia and hypertension are frequently prescribed nitrate containing medicines. If they are also taking a herbal supplement to treat erectile dysfunction, they could become very ill.

Next steps

The research paper describes the laboratory methods and techniques that can help with supplement testing in the future to ensure the safety of consumers. It highlights the vital role research and, in particular, techniques like data-mining, can play in informing regulators about current trends in supplement contamination.

Dr Michael Walker commented:

The laboratory tests we describe in our paper will assist regulators to tackle this problem proactively to protect consumers and responsible businesses.

Professor Declan Naughton explained:

This is very important to ensure effective testing strategies and, ultimately, to help keep the public safe.

The research described has been published by the Journal of the Association of Public Analysts (online) and can be accessed [here](#).

[Press release: Report 02/2017: Collision at Plymouth station](#)

Summary

At 15:34 hrs on Sunday 3 April 2016, the 13:39 hrs passenger train service from Penzance to Exeter collided with an empty train which was already waiting in platform 6 at Plymouth station. The collision occurred at a speed of about 15 mph (24 km/h) and resulted in injuries to 48 people and damage to both trains.

The signaller intended that both trains should share the platform because the empty train was to form a service to London and some passengers from the Penzance service were expected to join it. Lift refurbishment work meant that

without platform sharing, passengers would have needed to use the stairs and a subway when changing trains. Permissive signalling arrangements were in place at Plymouth to permit two trains to share the same platform.

The signaller misjudged the amount of space available behind the London train and wrongly believed there was room for the Penzance train. He was aware that the platform sharing arrangement required an unusual form of permissive working, but did not communicate this to the Penzance train driver, and the rules did not require him to do so.

The Penzance train driver incorrectly believed he would not be sharing a platform with the London train. There was insufficient distance to stop his train by the time he realised his mistake and had applied the emergency brake.

Great Western Railway, the operator of both trains, and Network Rail the owner of the infrastructure, had not identified the risk of a collision due to the combination of an unusual form of permissive working, the track alignment on the approach to Plymouth station, and an inexperienced driver.

Recommendations

The RAIB has made three recommendations. The first, addressed to Great Western Railway and possibly also relevant to other train operators, seeks improvements to the training and assessment of new drivers. The second, also addressed to Great Western Railway and possibly relevant to other train operators, arises from difficulties encountered during passenger evacuation and seeks improvements to emergency door release controls. The third recommendation, addressed to Network Rail and to be undertaken with the assistance of appropriate train operating companies, seeks a review of permissive working arrangements at stations.

Two learning points stress the care needed by drivers when undertaking permissive moves, and the value of preventing passengers boarding or alighting from trains when permissive movements are taking place in the same platform.

Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents said:

This collision caused great distress to the large numbers of passengers and staff involved, particularly those who suffered injuries. It occurred when a train was routed into a platform that was already occupied by a stationary high speed train. This form of train working, known as permissive platform working is not unusual on the UK's busy network and is usually performed safely. Platform sharing allows trains to be joined together or, as was intended in this case, can facilitate the easy movement of passengers between connecting train services.

This accident reinforces the need for drivers to take great care when signalled into an occupied platform – assumptions should never be made about the length of platform that is unoccupied. This

learning applies to all drivers but is particularly applicable to those who are inexperienced or new to a route. For this reason we have today issued a recommendation to Great Western Railway concerning the training and assessment of new drivers to better prepare them for permissive platform working. I am also urging other train operators to think about how well they prepare their drivers for similar circumstances.

Although the RAIB recognises the need for permissive working in station platforms, we have recommended that Network Rail, in conjunction with train operators, carries out a review of the way it is implemented at all stations where permissive platform working is currently authorised. This should include an assessment of a range of risk factors, including the information provided to the signallers when deciding whether or not to route a train into an occupied platform.

Notes to editors

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.
2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.
3. For media enquiries, please call 01932 440015.

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[News story: Berlin Embassy reception for Edinburgh International Film](#)

Festival

The British Embassy Berlin this week [10 February 2017] hosted this year's Berlinale reception to celebrate the 70th anniversary year of the Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF).

Scottish Secretary David Mundell and British Ambassador to Germany Sir Sebastian Wood held the event at the embassy for the first time. The reception is key to engaging the world's film industry in Edinburgh's film festival. The EIFF runs from 21 June to 2 July in the city.

David Mundell said:

This is a momentous year for the EIFF, as it celebrates its 70th anniversary. It focuses the world's cinema industry on Scotland, while showcasing some of the most interesting and entertaining films in the world.

I am very pleased that the UK Government hosted EIFF's Berlinale reception at the British Embassy. The world's film industry will be gathered in Berlin, making it a great opportunity to show off this year's EIFF. I hope that many will be able to join us in Edinburgh for the festival in June.

Sir Sebastian Wood said:

This evening we are celebrating two major international film festivals: the Berlinale and the Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF). In its 70th anniversary year, the EIFF will no doubt have a particularly exciting programme on offer this summer. So I am delighted to be able to welcome the Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell, among our guests here in the Embassy this evening.

It is also great to see Danny Boyle's 'T2 Trainspotting' have its international premiere in Berlin – hopefully the sequel will be just as successful as its predecessor.

Edinburgh's festivals are hugely important in economic terms, as well as putting Scotland and the UK on the international cultural map. In 2015 it was estimated that the Edinburgh festivals generated £313m of additional expenditure in the Scottish economy.

While in Berlin Mr Mundell also met the Aberdeen-based James Hutton Institute

at the Fruit Logistica agri show, and met academics from the Freie University to hear about their partnership with Glasgow University.

Mr Mundell was in Berlin on the second day of a two-day programme of European engagements on economic, social and cultural matters.

[Press release: Baroness Anelay's visit to East Africa](#)

Baroness Anelay, the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI), will travel this week to Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi, where she will see first-hand the support provided by the UK on preventing sexual violence, strengthening human rights and delivering humanitarian aid.

The Minister will also meet with a number of senior government representatives, including Ugandan President Museveni, and officials at the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She will also host a number of events with civil society, human rights defenders and members of the judiciary.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Baroness Anelay said:

I am delighted to have the opportunity to visit the region and see first-hand the work of the UK to tackle sexual violence and support survivors of these atrocious crimes.

This visit comes at an important time. Preventing sexual violence, ending the culture of impunity and ending survivor stigma remain top priorities for the UK. I am proud of the 17 Peace Support Training Centres that the UK has provided for training across the African continent since 2001.

I look forward to seeing the impact of our work. The UK is a friend and close partner of the region. We will continue to work together on shared challenges and opportunities.

Baroness Anelay will first travel to Kenya, where she will visit the British Peace Support Team (BPST (EA)) who are delivering teaching courses to police and security personnel from across the region on mechanisms for prevention and response to SGBV.

In Uganda, the Minister will visit a refugee settlement to see UK humanitarian support in action, meet survivors of sexual violence in Gulu refugee camp, and visit a gender-based violence shelter in Kampala. Despite the conflict in Northern Uganda ending over a decade ago, stigma suffered by

survivors continues to impact many aspects of their lives, including access to jobs and community services. In collaboration with organisations such as the Refugee Law Project and World Vision, the UK supports a number of projects in Uganda which help provide both physical and psychological support to survivors of sexual violence and children born of rape.

Before she travels to Burundi itself, in Rwanda the Minister will meet with Burundian human rights defenders in exile, independent media and NGO partners delivering UK projects. In Burundi, the Minister will meet with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and UN, AU and EU representatives to discuss how international partners can best work with the Burundian Government to support inclusive dialogue and bring a resolution to the protracted political crisis.

Whilst in Burundi, Baroness Anelay will also visit Centre SERUKA, which provides services for survivors of sexual violence. The UK provides support to a number of initiatives across Burundi, empowering women to prevent and address the impact of sexual violence. These initiatives reduce stigmatisation, promote the role of women in peace building and support faith and community leaders to investigate incidences of sexual violence.

Notes to Editors

1. The British Peace and Support Team (EA) in Kenya delivers pan-spectrum training as part of the UK's commitment to long term peace and support in East Africa.
2. This year alone, 9,500 military, police and civilians from across the region will be trained in specialist areas ranging from Protection of Civilians/Human Rights, through numerous types of tactical training to high-end Weapons Technical Intelligence and Counter-IED courses. BPST(EA)'s current primary focus is pre-deployment and in-mission training for troops making up the AU force in Somalia – AMISOM – prioritising those niche areas which are requested by regional militaries as enabling them to fight more effectively. The team also provides limited Counter Illegal Wildlife Trade training in security specific areas to Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania wildlife agencies.

Further information

[Press release: UK embraces healthcare](#)

collaboration with south China

UK Minister for Asia and the Pacific, Mr Alok Sharma, is leading a delegation of UK healthcare and life science business leaders to south China to explore opportunities to increase trade and collaboration between the UK and China.

The delegation will visit Guangzhou, Fuzhou and Xiamen, showcasing world class UK expertise and developing export opportunities for the UK across the region.

After 3 days in South China, Mr Sharma will travel to Beijing for a series of political meetings with Chinese Ministers. He will make a speech to mark 45 years of UK-China ambassadorial relations ahead of the official anniversary on 13 March 2017.

In Guangzhou, the Minister will open a healthcare roundtable at the First Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University between UK businesses and representatives of this prestige Chinese university and its 10 affiliated hospitals. The session will focus on UK capabilities in hospital infrastructure, training and education, digital health and out-of-hospital care. The Minister will also witness the signing of an agreement between Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hospital and Cardiff University on breast cancer research.

Speaking ahead of his visit, the Minister for Asia and the Pacific Alok Sharma said:

The UK has a strong and innovative healthcare and life sciences sector. Our NHS ranks amongst the best in the world. British expertise and businesses are well placed to support China in achieving its national vision of 'Healthy 2030'.

There is a wealth of investment and export opportunities for the UK across south China. Guangdong has the largest GDP of all China's provinces and its economy grew by 7.5% last year. Part of Fujian's Free Trade Zone, Xiamen is the sixteenth largest port in the world, and its openness to trade has made it a pioneer in economic reform.

China has the largest education system in the world, with an estimated market value of £340 billion by 2020. Our world class British universities are already collaborating on areas like healthcare training, research, clinical services and new hospital buildings and refurbishment. I look forward to seeing even greater cooperation and commercial and export opportunities for British businesses.

Mr Sharma will open a newly-expanded UK Visa Application Centre in Fuzhou as part of plans to accommodate the increasing number of Chinese applicants. Fuzhou is one of 15 centres across China, welcoming visitors to study, holiday and invest in the UK.

The Minister will also visit Xiamen, Cardiff's flourishing sister city and part of the Fujian Free Trade Zone. Xiamen University has connections with more than 12 British universities, and is partnering with Cardiff University on a new dental school.

Further information

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