

NEWS RELEASE

Natural Health Products Regulations: Common sense dictates that they should not be abandoned without ever having been fully enforced.

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Calls to make government standards for natural health products tougher through new regulations, or to weaken them by making changes to the *Food and Drugs Act*, are both premature according to Consumer Health Products Canada, the trade association representing manufacturers of consumer health products, including OTC medicines and natural health products. “An enormous amount of work has gone into creating the *Natural Health Products Regulations* and all of the associated guidelines and policies to ensure that they are appropriate for this class of products and respond to the needs of Canadians,” said CHP Canada’s Gerry Harrington. “It would defy common sense to abandon them now and start over, when they’ve never really been enforced.”

An editorial in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* earlier this week called for stricter regulation of natural health products, saying that “Regulatory evaluation should include a review of indications, clear labelling of health claims that an average consumer can understand, assurance of good manufacturing practices and a fulsome statement of product content.” CHP Canada believes that this is precisely what the *Natural Health Products Regulations* were meant to do and could do, given the chance. Unfortunately, a lack of full enforcement by Health Canada means that products fully licensed under these regulations sit on store shelves alongside unlicensed products that do not meet the same standards, contributing greatly to the consumer confusion highlighted in the CMAJ editorial.

The CMAJ editorial’s call for consistent regulation of health products is entirely aligned with research conducted by Redfern Research for CHP Canada in 2010, which showed that 91 per cent of Canadians agreed that “Government should ensure that all natural health products can be used safely as directed on the label and that there is evidence to support the claims made for them before allowing them on the market.”

“Canadians who practice self-care with natural health products and OTC medicines want to take greater control and responsibility for their own health,” said Mr. Harrington, “and in doing so, they can lighten the load on our over-burdened health-care system. But this can only work if the products they use meet consistent standards to ensure that they can be used safely and that they do what is claimed for them on product labels and in advertising.”



Recent calls by one industry stakeholder to reopen the *Food and Drugs Act* to modify the legal definition of natural health product would do nothing for Canadians who practice self-care with these products. “Natural health products already have a completely separate set of regulations, developed expressly for them alone and distinct from any other category of products regulated under the *Food and Drugs Act*,” said Mr. Harrington. “Changes to the Act would have no impact at all, other than to delay full implementation of the existing regulations even further.”

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