



22 October 2013

FDA ADVISORY

No. 2013-044

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC WARNING ON TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS,
PROMOTIONS AND MARKETING OF FOOD SUPPLEMENTS
BASED ON ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE AND TESTIMONIALS**

The FDA issued DOH-FDA Advisory No. 2012-008 which warned the public that food or dietary supplements (F/DS) have no approved therapeutic or curative effects. These F/DS were granted market authorization as food products and not as drug products. As food products, evidence-based or clinical studies on these F/DS need not be submitted to the FDA. However, all food supplements are required to carry on their labels the phrase “No Approved Therapeutic Claims” because as food products they are not intended to treat, diagnose nor cure diseases. Therapeutic claims can only be made for drug products authorized by the FDA.

The FDA has noted that several food supplements are being advertised, promoted and marketed over the TV as having therapeutic claims. The endorsers are peddling testimonials made by people who took the food supplement. The false claim of unscrupulous peddlers are even accompanied with the FDA logo and the Certificate of Product Registration (CPR) as food products that are flashed on the screen to give a semblance of legitimacy.

The most prominent weekly Sunday show features an F/DS laminine, which is registered by FDA as *Laminine (Mixed Chicken Egg with Fish & Vegetable Protein) Dietary Supplement Capsule* (<http://www.fda.gov.ph/consumers-corner/registered-food-supplements/8800-fr-101530>). Some of the testimonials are even featured in the internet, like in YouTube. Although they flash on screen a disclaimer that they “do not offer medical advice” however, the public should understand that the product endorser or peddler, whether a doctor or not, cannot make a diagnosis until he/she has fully examined the patient to be able to prescribe the appropriate health product and give the prognosis of the disease.

Patients who buy food supplements from peddlers on TV instead of consulting their attending physician face serious health risks. Failure to get proper treatment may prove fatal. Taking food supplements instead of the prescribed drugs may cause serious damage to major tissues and organs that may require long hospitalization or may result to permanent damage to vital organs. Relying on treatment based on hypes over medical science may lead to permanent physical or mental disability. For patients who are suffering from infectious diseases, they could end up as carriers of pathogens who can infect their family members and other people. Some food supplements when taken by a pregnant woman or breastfeeding mother may adversely affect the fetus or baby.

The public is advised to be more discerning about their health and the health products that they buy. Patients should see their doctors in DOH-licensed health facilities or





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establishments to get proper treatment for their disease or to ask for advice on the benefits or risks of taking food supplements.

Television advertisements are expensive and people who peddle these food supplements have financial interest in promoting their products as well as responsibility to the public. Product advertisers, endorsers or owners are requested to seek FDA approval to ensure that consumers are given correct and factual information.

If you know anyone who suffered from adverse events or reactions that are serious enough to have caused death, hospitalization, permanent disability, or may have resulted to birth defects, please email FDA at report@fda.gov.ph. For more information or inquiry, kindly email us at info@fda.gov.ph.


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