

Study Says Tainted Supplements Sold After Recalls

According to new research, some manufacturers are continuing to sell tainted [dietary supplements](#) that are often spiked with hidden and potentially dangerous drug months and even years after being the subjects of product recalls.

Research published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* revealed that 27 supplements that were available for purchase online in the summer of 2013 that were among 274 recalled during 2009-2012 were identified. Tests conducted by the research team disclosed that one or more pharmaceuticals in nearly 67 percent of the supplements available for purchase, including chemicals similar to the erectile dysfunction drug Viagra or the diet drug Meridia that was pulled from the market due to stroke and heart attack risks. The study also found that 85 percent of sports enhancement or bodybuilding supplements purchased by the researchers remained adulterated with dangerous compounds.

Pieter Cohen, an assistant professor at Harvard Medical School and one of the authors of the study, said consumers need to avoid the categories of supplements that these drugs are found in: weight-loss, [sports supplements](#), and sexual enhancement supplements. He added the regulatory approach to supplements offers little assurance to consumers that products in these categories are truly all-natural and do not include potentially dangerous pharmaceuticals.

Cohen and the research team found Novedex XT (contains an anabolic steroid and an anti-estrogen compound), Massdrol ([bodybuilding supplement](#)), Slim Xtreme Herbal Slimming Capsule (containing Sibutramine), and M-Drol (containing a steroid or steroid-like compound) as the faulty products. M-Drol was recalled in 2009 while Slim Xtreme Herbal Slimming Capsule was recalled in 2011. Massdrol was recalled in 2009 and Novedex XT: was recalled in 2010 as it included an anti-estrogen compound.

The research called for more aggressive enforcement by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. It also urged for an increase in powers of the agency for preventing supposedly all-natural dietary supplements that are often spiked with pharmaceuticals from being marketed to consumers.

Steve Mister, president of the Council for Responsible Nutrition, remarked the journal article grossly misrepresents the extent of the situation and understates the success of FDA's efforts. It was noted by Mister and Daniel Fabricant, executive director of the Natural Products Association, that the researchers were able to buy only 27 of the recalled supplements and the tests did not find pharmaceuticals in nine of them, indicating they had been reformulated.

Fabricant, who was the FDA's top supplement regulator until this year, remarked the FDA does take action against companies that sell tainted supplements but it too often takes a long time to build felony cases against bad actors. He went on to remark that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration should be using its authority to bring faster misdemeanor cases against firms selling adulterated supplements.

In a statement, the FDA said that it faces the challenge of providing effective deterrents to prevent unscrupulous firms from fraudulently marketing and importing these products. It also remarked the industry is extremely fragmented and often involves products made overseas and packaged and sold by different small distributors, some of them difficult to identify and locate.