Guidelines for Evaluating Nutrition Companies

Nowadays everyone seems to claim that their nutrition products are backed by substantial clinical research. Here are some guidelines for evaluating these claims and deciding which company is the best.

1) Look for **intervention clinical studies (those involving giving the supplement to real people).** Studies in test tubes, cell culture dishes, and in animals don't always predict what will happen in people. Epidemiologic or population studies (those that compare what different population groups eat, for example) are good for proposing hypotheses, **but until they are tested in a clinical trial, they are not considered as proof of effectiveness.** As for the clinical studies, if the study is measuring the delivery of a nutrient to the bloodstream, it does not need to be double blind or placebo-controlled. On the other hand, if the study is measuring a health outcome (for example, lower cholesterol or decreased pain) it should be both placebo controlled and double blind

2) Look for studies that have been **published in peer-reviewed medical journals. If** a company tells "that their scientists have shown", you have no way of evaluating the quality of their data unless it has been peer-reviewed and published in a credible journal. You also need to know that there are advertising journals as well as credible scientific journals. **An advertising journal will accept any article for a price and there is no peer review to evaluate the quality of the data. If in doubt as to whether a journal is credible, check it out on PubMed, the National Library of Medicine web site.**

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=PubMed

Finally, the same is true for studies reported in the **newspaper, in magazines, and in books,** even in those written by popular authors. Many of those articles can **best be characterized as "nutrition fiction"** and have not been peer-reviewed by scientists in the field.

3) **The studies should be done with the company's actual product in the population group it is designed for.** Many companies will say that "their product contains ingredient "X" that has been shown to". In fact, that doesn't guarantee that the original studies were valid or that the ingredient will have that effect in their product. Companies will also quote studies that were done on other company's products. Because Shaklee does more studies than anyone else, many nutrition companies quote Shaklee's clinical studies in support of their products. Of course, their products were formulated differently than Shaklee's and they don't have Shaklee's quality controls, so there is no guarantee that their product will perform as well as Shaklee's product.

4) **Look for a large number of clinical studies on a variety of different products.** Some companies have only one or two credible products and all of their clinical studies are focused on that product. They'd like you to think their other products are just as good, but in fact many are not backed by any credible research.

5) **Make sure that they are not being selective in the studies they tell you about.** For example, one major manufacturer of garlic touts two clinical studies which show that their product lowers cholesterol, but neglects to tell you about two other studies which showed that their product had no effect on cholesterol levels.

If they tell you that such studies are impractical, too expensive, or unnecessary, don't believe them. Shaklee has shown that if a company is committed to making the best products possible, such studies are essential. Shaklee has conducted over 100 clinical studies on a wide variety of their products. Those studies are all published in peer-reviewed medical journals.

Sincerely,
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Bio: *Dr. Stephen G. Chaney received his B.S. degree in Chemistry from Duke University and Ph. D. degree in Biochemistry from UCLA. He is currently Professor in the Departments of Biochemistry and Nutrition at the University of North Carolina where he has taught nutrition to medical students for over twenty years. He has authored numerous scholarly papers as well as two chapters on nutrition for one of the leading biochemistry textbooks for medical students.*