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Durbin's GMP Challenge

Senator Dick Durbin grasps at straws to defame the supplement industry.

The FDA seems to be shifting its focus from New Dietary Ingredients (NDI) guidelines to Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). In fact, FDA brass recently indicated that GMP compliance is now the agency's primary supplement industry focus. Always the follower, Senator Dick Durbin has made the same shift. After the complete rejection of his ill-fated FDA Reauthorization For User Fees bill amendment, Durbin switched strategies in his attack on health freedom.

In July, Durbin wrote a letter to major supplement industry organizations. He cited "poor manufacturing standards that expose consumers to potentially serious health risks," and demanded to know how the industry plans to improve adoption of GMPs.

It is interesting to see Durbin grasping at straws, jumping from one flailing attack on health freedom to another. One has to wonder, where is Durbin getting his information? And does he really believe that the American public will buy his stories? When Durbin speaks of the need for GMPs, he fails to acknowledge that the majority of leading nutritional supplement manufacturers have already adopted these practices. Moreover, Durbin doesn't seem to realize that consumers have the health freedom—and the health IQ—to select manufacturers that employ GMP certification.

No Basis in Reality

When he discusses dietary supplements in terms of poor manufacturing and potential health risks, Durbin is engaging in fear-mongering that has no basis in reality. One would think Durbin would have learned his lesson after spearheading an Adverse Events Reporting campaign back in 2006. After insisting that AER was necessary to track the "dangers" of nutritional supplementation, Durbin was silenced when early AER results suggested one out of every 303,000 people may experience an adverse event (including very mild adverse events) from taking nutritional supplements.

In stark contrast, evidence suggests that there are 400 times as many adverse events reported for synthetic drugs than there are for supplements. And yet, despite this evidence, here is Durbin once again doggedly trying to convince the American public that supplements should be equated to "potentially serious health risks."

Durbin's letter is just the latest smear campaign from a desperate politician seeking to fabricate a platform. But once again, Durbin is barking up the wrong tree with Good Manufacturing Practices. GMP certification is a program developed by the Natural Products Association and FDA to help ensure supplements are safe, pure and effective. The GMP umbrella covers many different aspects of supplement manufacturing, including staff training, cleanliness, equipment maintenance, record keeping and receiving of raw materials.

The nutritional supplement industry has welcomed GMP, because GMP harmonizes with the industry's goal of supplying consumers with health-enhancing nutrition. Durbin may be blustering and demanding of the supplement industry, "What are you going to do to adopt Good Manufacturing Practices?" But leading supplement manufacturers will answer, "GMPs? No problem. We adopted GMPs years ago."

Keep an Eye on Durbin

Dick Durbin has a history of trickery when it comes to disparaging the nutritional supplement industry. His GMP demands seem harmless enough, but it's becoming increasingly clear that a legendary enemy of health freedom is escalating his attacks on the supplement industry.

We must remain vigilant. Please continue advocating for health freedom and DSHEA. Maintain resistance against the FDA's New Dietary Draft Guidance, which remains in limbo. And keep an eye on Dick Durbin, who may be planning a new assault on your health freedom. Visit www.NHA2012.com today—join the Nutritional Health Alliance for more updates, news and insight! ❖

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