

Turnabout: Now the Mainstream Media Reports That Vitamins Can Reduce the Risk of Cancer

Source: Alliance for Natural Health

These vitamins come from a major drug company. Maybe we should conclude that vitamins made by a drug company reduce cancer and others don't?

A new study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, favorite home for every would-be debunker of vitamins, finds that a low-dose multivitamin may help prevent cancer in men, cutting their risk by up to 8%. Two facets of the study were especially interesting. The multivitamin tested, Centrum Silver, is made by Big Pharma company Pfizer. And the study specifically tied the benefits to lower doses which, according to the study's lead author, are to be preferred to higher doses. This conclusion was of course in no way supported by the study itself.

We don't know what the author means by low or high doses. It probably isn't what integrative MDs and DOs would mean. But we think that just discussing the issue this way reveals a lack of understanding. Supplements need to be combined properly. If used therapeutically, the dose must be tailored to the individual and address his or her specific deficiencies in order to be effective. This is precisely the sort of thing that cannot be studied through double-blind random-controlled trials, or RCTs (the so-called "gold standard" of conventional medicine), which tends to ignore gender, age, and genetic differences in order to achieve a standardized, one-size-fits-all approach.

The authors of this new study also write that "the role of food-focused cancer prevention strategy such as targeted fruit and vegetable intake remains promising but unproven, given the inconsistent epidemiologic evidence and lack of definitive trial data." Well, yes, we can probably learn more from properly conducted studies. But let's keep in mind that the nutrient content of food varies enormously based on the quality of the soil it is grown in and other factors.

The same is true of supplements. It would be interesting to test Centrum to see how good the ingredients are. This is not the multivitamin that most of us at ANH would take. Indeed, we generally don't buy our supplements at the drug store, where the ingredients are often synthetic (among other issues). We buy from local or online health food stores.

And no matter what food or supplement you buy, we have to reiterate: people differ, and they certainly differ in how they use and react to food and supplements. One-size-fits-all is fine for auto manufacture, not for people.

In addition, the media response to this study has been big—and overwhelmingly positive. Could this be because the only multivitamin used for the duration of the study was Centrum Silver, a supplement

manufactured by Pfizer, the world's largest pharmaceutical company? Although Pfizer did not fund the study, it assisted with it by supplying the samples. And Big Pharma keeps mainstream media afloat through its advertising dollars. Not surprisingly, the brand of the supplement is named prominently in almost all the coverage. Without the backing of Big Pharma, media coverage of supplements is usually very different indeed!