

Mike Nichols MD

Health Management

Nam et ipsa scientia potestas est.

Knowledge is power. - Francis Bacon

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Supplements

Many of the recommendations I've made over the years are now 'conventional wisdom' though they were not so at the time of my advocacy. Fine; I was lucky.

One position I hold is still far from 'conventional wisdom' and is perhaps the most controversial point for which I make recommendations: I am generally opposed to the use of dietary supplements. It is my opinion that their use almost, not always, but almost always makes worse the very thing their use was intended to make better and worse other things besides.

A recent article in the September 2009 "Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise" is illustrative. This journal is the official publication of 'The American College of Sports Medicine.' Articles here tend to be done with smaller numbers of subjects and on topics not 'newsworthy' enough to make the political potboilers like the New England Journal of Medicine and other larger more prestigious journals. Still it is science and one source of thought outside the conventional 'cut, burn and poison' of most medical journals. By the way, as that was a rather snide summary of 'conventional medicine', I want to be clear that sometimes 'cut, burn and poison' is just what is needed; but not often.

Okay now to the study: "Antioxidants Do Not Prevent Postexercise Peroxidation and May Delay Muscle Recovery." The title gives it all away. Subjects were athletes and the exercise challenge was a 1000 meter maximal flat-water kayaking trial with or without antioxidant

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supplementation. Now the compounding of the supplement can and will be argued forever: yes they only used alpha tocopherol, a few of the carotenoids, etc, etc. Before and after exercise and both after a cycle of the antioxidant cocktail and without the cocktail they measured a host of inflammation and oxidation markers as well as some of the proteins/enzymes associated with muscle damage and recovery. Worse with, better without.

Why would this be? Why have almost every single one of the larger, well done supplement studies shown harm and not benefit? Why do people still INSIST that supplements work and you should buy theirs? HmMMM.

Now we are in the realm of the general, of the theoretic but I will tell you why supplements don't work. As a young doc I was taught that older people have less stomach acid and therefore couldn't absorb, more to the story, B-12 and were prone to anemia and fatigue. The absence of acid was the culprit. We are now being told everyone is Vitamin D deficient and need to take Vitamin D, some of us probably do, but no reason is given for this epidemic. Well try sunscreen and fear of skin cancer. This from a guy who has had many.

Just take something and everything will be well. When the car does not run absence of gasoline is not always the problem. All nutrient systems in the body, all parts that work to make us healthy use vitamins, minerals, proteins and fats, not in a simple sequential series, where the absence of one nutrient is the problem. The body runs on complex clusters of interactive, codependent, 'galaxies' of nutrients that then pass on sequentially the products of the previous step in a chemically rich three dimensional environment. If there is something wrong with a particular galaxy the solution is not more and more of

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one star in the complex but restoration of the entire galaxy! Food, nutrient dense food, provides these nutrient galaxies; provides them in the precise ratios of constituent elements and the proper stereochemical arrangement so that they will work rather than 'gum up the works' ala taking supplements.

Well at some level I ask you take that last paragraph on a kind of faith. For those of you who want to do the work I often start you with the book: **Power, Sex, Suicide: Mitochondria and the Meaning of Life by Nick Lane.**

After that, your curiosity peaked, some of you may want to go back to your organic chemistry and biochemistry. This may seem like a presumptuous suggestion but I, very gratefully, look on all of you as involved in the great experiment of health that I try to host. As I in general, some of you know exceptions, advise against a commonly recommended health action, taking supplements, I want us to share not only in the responsibility but also in the fun of discovering the truth as best we can.

Eat right, exercise right, sleep right; OK, Live Right and all else will follow.

Snoring and Aging

Some of you will have looked at the brazenly amateurish video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Ie79Jb3I4E) John Naylor and I made of the exercises I use and advise for sleep apnea, snoring and double chin. Several of you told me the video did not provide adequate direction. Frankly I thought John's graceful, natural, unaffected execution was all that was needed. My email mentioned that some of the exercises were derived from the Yoga pose "The Lion."

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We know that there are several elements to the evolution of sleep apnea beyond the conventional one of fat neck, poor bite, insulin resistance, increased inflammation markers and the like.

Still at the bottom level sleep apnea is loss of tone of the muscles of the area in, around and behind the mouth and neck and that this tone, like most elements of aging and given the beautiful plasticity of the human brain and body, this tone is recoverable through well, consistently executed exercises. Did they tell you sleep apnea was caused by a long uvula? Well did you snore when you were 16 and had that same long uvula? If the answer is no then that is not the cause and cutting it off may be unnecessary. Always had a thick neck and didn't use to snore; then do the exercises. Always thin and didn't use to snore? You see where this is going. Take a look at that videographically challenged video and after you stop laughing start doing the exercises. Or do you like that C-PAP machine and increased fatigue and chance of heart attack?

Smile, keep me posted and God Speed,

Dr. Mike

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