

MEDIA RELEASE

3 May 2016



OLIVE LEAF EXTRACT DEBATE NEEDS BIGGER PICTURE VIEW

The industry body representing this country's natural products sector is calling for perspective and reason in relation to recent media reports about a consumer who claimed she suffered adverse effects caused by overdosing on products containing olive leaf extract.

Phil Rasmussen from Natural Products NZ says there have been many unestablished and inconclusive statements made in the news media and the *New Zealand Medical Journal* and he cautions against jumping to uninformed conclusions about what actually caused the woman's reaction.

"The truth is that nobody knows for sure what actually caused it. Even if it could be pinpointed conclusively to the new product that she took, it contained several ingredients so it would be impossible to isolate the problem without further investigation."

Mr Rasmussen said he was surprised at the media coverage being generated about this case given that it only involved one consumer, who had for several years successfully used products containing olive leaf, and one instance of a reaction that had an unproven cause.

Mr Rasmussen challenged as "pure speculation" a published conclusion that the woman's out of character behavioural responses 'might be explained by two ingredients of olive leaf extract, oleuropein and hydroxytyrosol'.

"Hydroxytyrosol has some structural similarities to the neurotransmitter dopamine that modulates mood but 'some structural similarities' does not equate to conclusive evidence that olive leaf actually can modulate dopamine in an adverse manner to affect human behaviour," says Mr Rasmussen. He noted that hydroxytyrosol in the form of olive oil is ingested by millions of people every day without adverse effect and, if anything, the evidence suggests it has beneficial rather than adverse effects on health, particularly in terms of potential antioxidant and neuroprotective effects.

More.../3

Olive leaf extract / 3

He added that the suggestion that 'all supplements and herbal remedies be regulated as medicines' was not as straightforward as it appeared at face value.

"Regulatory agencies worldwide are grappling with the question of whether a natural health product is in fact a medicine or a 'dietary supplement'. Many natural health products are derived from or closely related to foods, so it is essential to take an appropriate rather than excessive regulatory approach."

Mr Rasmussen went on to say that NPNZ supports the Natural Health Products Bill, which aims to provide some much needed updated regulations to the natural health product industry in New Zealand. While in its current format the bill provides for a model that has a somewhat lower regulatory requirement than that of the Australian TGA where most natural health products are regulated as medicines, it is significant that the words 'Dietary Supplements' have recently been removed from the Bill's title.

"However, as is the case with any legislation, the Bill's passage into law will not avoid the fact that adverse effects will still occasionally occur in rare cases, as with any food or medicine."

Natural Products New Zealand (NPNZ) is a national industry organisation representing this country's natural products, functional foods, complementary medicines, cosmeceuticals and nutraceuticals industries within New Zealand and internationally.

-ENDS-

For more information contact:

Alison Quesnel
Executive Director
Natural Products NZ
Ph: (09) 531 5717
Mob: 021 415 888
Email: alison@naturalproducts.nz
Web: www.naturalproducts.nz

Anna Radford
Radford Communications
Ph: (09) 849 6640
Mob: 021 251 2628
Email: anna@radford.co.nz