

GINGKO AND ST. JOHN'S WORT

ON JAN 1st the popular herb St. John's Wort (hypericum) became a prescription-only medicine in the Republic of Ireland. Formerly widely available in health stores, severe penalties can now await anyone guilty of the crime of freely selling it.

Ginkgo Biloba is another extremely beneficial herb, which was made prescription-only in Ireland some time ago, on absolutely no evidence and with little protest at the time.

The end result so far is that at present doctors don't actually use them while health stores cannot sell them: so they are effectively banned.

They have also been gifted to the pharmaceutical industry as exclusive products for future promotion. Compare the situation in Germany where the choice in health stores is very limited and the pharmacies control most vitamins etc.



VITAMIN C COULD COST 18 TIMES MORE THAN IN AMERICA!

A 1996 study found that vitamin C tablets in Germany could cost as much as 18 times what they cost in America! And that is not counting the cost of obtaining a prescription from your doctor!

St. John's Wort is an effective herbal treatment for mild to moderate depression, a point admitted by former Minister for Health Mr. Cowen, in speaking to the Dail. Both the Irish Medicines Board and Mr. Cowen have stated that they consider the treatment of mild to moderate depression should be a matter for doctors only, and that this was the major reason for its banning. There is no basis in Irish law for this statement and the IMB are greatly exceeding their remit in saying so. What, you may wonder, are psychotherapists, exercise therapists, massage therapists and nutritionists to make of such a statement? Such therapists are likely to provide far better treatment for depression than a doctor.

The original purpose of the "prescription-only" list was to control poisonous substances and dangerous drugs - now it is being used politically to limit and restrict the health food industry. There is no good evidence to substantiate charges of damaging side-effects due to either of these herbs.

DEPRIVED OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VIBRANT, HIGH-TECH HEALTH AND FITNESS FOODS

Let us be watchful of this process. For want of vigilance, people in countries such as Norway, Germany and Italy have been deprived of the development of the vibrant, high-tech health and fitness foods retailing that is now one of America's greatest growth industries.

In 1991 the Tony Quinn Health Centres with the Irish Association of Holistic Medicine campaigned to prevent the application of draconian regulations which would have destroyed the availability of food supplements in Ireland. By taking our case to the Minister and a Committee of the Dail at the time it was agreed that existing consumer protection laws were sufficient protection for the public, and that has been the situation until now.

The freedom to treat and, as adults, to seek out whatever form of medicine we think fit are valuable and important freedoms in the common law of Ireland and Britain. Even when medical doctors were originally registered in the 19th Century, this freedom was deliberately maintained by parliament. The attitude in Europe can be very different.

Fortunately we have an excellent precedent

- Banned Herbs. Why we should care - what we can do?



BY MARTIN FORDE

from the USA in the shape of the Dietary Supplements Health and Education Act which has given legal protection to the health industry, and resulted in an explosive growth in the availability of health-promoting products in the USA.

PEOPLE SHOULD BE FREE TO CHOOSE

We feel that people should be free to choose, and that you cannot restrict the development of new products, nor the worldwide dissemination of knowledge about the beneficial uses of herbs.

This time, the entire health food industry in Ireland, both manufacturers and the Irish Association of Health Stores has geared itself to action to ensure a free and open market for safe products, and we support and participate in this work.

AS A CONSUMER YOU CAN

● Show your concern by supporting Consumers for Health Choice, a very committed and sincere voluntary group headed up by the hard-working Gabrielle McAuley. (Tel. 01-451 8681)

● If you are interested in health freedom, why not make your voice heard and write to your local TD and to the Minister for Health, Hawkins House, Dublin 2.

Reference
(1) John Hammell
LIFE EXTENSION FOUNDATION, 1996

SUPPORTING BETTER HEALTH IN EUROPE



From left: Martin Forde, Theo Van Rooij - Netherlands, Jennifer Bryant-Pearson - UK, Pedro Vincente Azua (Campaign Director), Carl Rawlings - CRN UK, Alberto Riva - Spain

At a recent meeting in Brussels, naturopath Martin Forde, President of the Irish Association of Holistic Medicine, represented the Irish Health Trade Association in a meeting with health industry repre-

sentatives from across Europe. The meeting was called by the European Association of Health Food Manufacturers to plan the protection of the legal status of food supplements in the EU.

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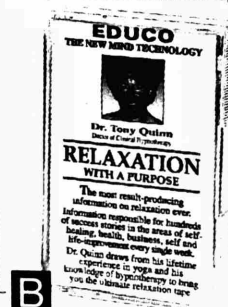
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