

all, would family physicians find new about taking on leadership roles, working collaboratively, partnering in health promotion, or providing high-quality medical care? These are traditional roles we have filled for the past 50 years.

The real need for an editorial such as this is in journals directed to health care administrators, health planners, regional health care chief executive officers, nurses and other health professionals, and yes, health and policy researchers who have a profound lack of understanding of the scope, philosophy, and practice of family medicine. These are the individuals and groups who need to be educated about what we do so that they will cease to blame us for being the roadblocks to reform and will engage us as partners in the process.

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by fax

Reference

1. Casebeer A, Reay T. Reinventing primary health care. Physicians have a pivotal part to play [editorial]. *Can Fam Physician* 2004;50:1345-7 (Eng), 1351-3 (Fr).

Author stands by results of probiotics study

Commercially prepared probiotics continue to be unregulated here in Canada. In January 2004 Health Canada opened a new branch called the Natural Health Products Directorate (NHPD). Although the NHPD has set up guidelines for good manufacturing practices, the actual contents of health products sold commercially are not analyzed or tested for their authenticity.

Products chosen for the study¹ contained lactobacillus, as this bacterium is the only probiotic to demonstrate some benefit in shortening bouts of diarrhea in large randomized control trials. The products were picked at random from various health stores in the lower mainland of British Columbia. All storage instructions were followed, and the contents were transferred aseptically for analysis. Both the person transferring the contents and the microbiologist were blinded to the ingredients of each product.

Regarding the culture media, the initials BAP should have been expanded as “blood agar plate” and CNA as “colistin naladistic agar,” which is especially good for growing Gram-positive organisms. All of the culture media used for cultivation are appropriate for growing anaerobic, aerobic, micro-aerophilic, and facultative microorganisms. The ingredients of the media and the US Pharmacopeia and Drug Identification Numbers are available on request.

There were no competing interests for this study. The results were similar in a UK study done in 1996,² and I stand by the results of this study.¹ The public is essentially buying products that have no proven benefit and that are not being regulated or analyzed by Health Canada at this time.

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References

1. Huff BA. Caveat emptor. “Probiotics” might not be what they seem. *Can Fam Physician* 2004;50:583-7.
2. Hamilton-Miller JM, Shah S, Smith CT. “Probiotic” remedies are not what they seem. *BMJ* 1996;312(7022):55-6.

