Author’s response to reviews

Title: Clinically relevant safety issues associated with St. John’s wort product labels

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There is a documented knowledge deficiency among physicians, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals (HCPs) regarding herbal products. Specifically, a lack of awareness about drug interactions and other clinically relevant safety issues with St. John’s wort (SJW) has been demonstrated. The product label is a potential source of information for consumers and HCPs about SJW, with a recent student reporting that more complete label information was associated with higher quality counseling about the product.

Our article, “Clinically relevant safety issues associated with St. John’s wort product labels,” aimed to evaluate and characterize the inclusion of clinically relevant safety information on SJW labels in a national sample for the USA. Further, it offers the following: 1) a measure of the magnitude of the inadequacies of current SJW labeling, which could serve as a wake-up call to policy makers and practitioners, 2) provision of information on the handful of SJW products that do have adequate labeling, 3) illustration of the issue to other countries such as those in the European Union and Canada (which has recently undergone a change in label requirements) and, 4) provision of a review to general practitioners of safety considerations associated with SJW.

In considering a target journal, we wanted to insure that our findings had the opportunity to be well disseminated. Also, based on our support of the open access model and recent experience with publishing in a BMC journal, we wanted to make these results freely available to anyone. To underline that point, I believe that our BMC article from last year (doi:10.1186/1472-6947-7-7) speaks to both the impact of open access and our ability to produce high-impact work, since it is currently the most accessed article in that journal for the last 12 months. While we believe the appeal of this topic is broad enough for consideration in BMC Medicine, we certainly think that the scope of this article fits very well in BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine. Thus, we respectfully submit this article for consideration in belief that it will be of interest to a broad medical community and in hopes that it is a piece to help stimulate dialogue about the state of dietary supplement labeling in the USA and beyond. We appreciate your time and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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