

Roundtable

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Supplement Your Practice

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Asking the right questions can help you have a thriving nutritional supplement profit center



A September 2006 survey indicates that 65% of adult Americans take dietary supplements.¹ With that many people taking the natural route to improve their health, chiropractors can take advantage of this opportunity by selling nutritional supplements out of their practices.

Chiropractic Products spoke to four experts to find out how chiropractors can help their bottom line and their patients by selling nutritional supplements. Daryl DeLuca is vice president and owner, Biotics Research Corporation in Rosenberg Tex. Matthew Armstrong, NC, is vice president of A.C. Grace Company in Big Sandy, Tex. Allan Wilson is national manager for Anabolic Laboratories in Irvine, Calif. Joe Fawcett, DC, CCSP, is spokesman for Drucker Labs Inc in Parker, Tex.

How can DCs maximize their return on investment for selling supplements?

DeLuca: Most chiropractors utilize a core group of eight to 12 products that they most commonly prescribe to their patients. Therefore, a large inventory of products is unnecessary, and there are typically no constraints on offering products outside of your core product grouping. The truth be told, a large percentage of clients are already purchasing some of these types of products. They are just not purchasing them from you. Thus, they are failing to see the value of individualized nutrition achieved by obtaining products from you. As a consequence, the products they are utilizing may very well be of dubious quality.

Armstrong: DCs can maximize their return on investment by offering the highest-quality supplements that actually work. Supplements that are unique to doctors and also effectively improve health will bring patients back and result in greater referrals.

Wilson: Offering nutrition as a service to your patients does not have to be a significant investment to the average chiropractor. Depending on the practice's goals for incorporating nutrition, there are many successful strategies to maximize return: 1) Offer staff part of the proceeds from the sales of products, or put money toward a fun event. 2) You don't get paid to hear patients talk about their diet. Follow a format or guidelines when you are talking nutrition with patients. 3) Put on mini-nutritional lectures at local community events. 4) Make nutrition part of your new-patient procedures.

Fawcett: It is best to focus on a select nutritional line the doctor and staff really believe in, as opposed to having a hodgepodge of various products that tend to make patients so confused on what they should take, that they end up throwing their hands up and not purchasing anything. The closer to being "complete"—with one item or product line—the better. And being 100% organic is critical.

What research is available that shows the effectiveness of the products?

DeLuca: Biotics Research Corp has a significant amount of research available to support its products. In fact, over the years, we have published research supporting many of our products, not only in chiropractic journals, but in prestigious peer review publications such as *The British Medical Journal*.

Armstrong: Literally thousands of research papers document the health benefits of vitamin E and other supplements. Some recent studies of great import include the Women's Health Study, which showed a 49% decrease in cardiovascular deaths in the highest-risk women for heart disease. Also, the Cambridge Heart and Antioxidant Study (CHAOS) showed a 75% decrease in nonfatal heart attacks with vitamin E supplementation.

Wilson: Available research varies greatly by product and ingredient. New companies and products show up every day, touting supporting research. You can see all the published research for free at www.pubmed.gov. Just type in what you want to look up. In the unregulated supplement business, a lot of new items are by-products of industry. That does not mean the products are bad. Many of them turn out to be great (like glucosamine sulfate, or grape seed extract), but there are no magic pills. You won't see any research on PubMed saying, "This product is the only one that works."

Fawcett: The McHale independent study with 80 participants demonstrated obvious energy production and increased strength and

stamina, hence providing support to the immune system after 30 days on intraMAX™.

What is the most important question a DC should ask when deciding on which products to sell?

DeLuca: "Is the supplier a primary manufacturer (does the supplier make its own products) with extensive in-house laboratory facilities and capabilities, allowing for strict enforcement of stringent quality-control procedures, offering products exclusively through health care professionals, which achieve the desired results?" When considering which products to offer or prescribe, the most important question is, "What are the most common supplement needs of my patients, and which products will best serve those needs?" I suggest CoQ-Zyme 30 and B12-2000. Why? The two top-prescribed drugs in the United States are statin drugs. Statin drugs negatively impact CoQ status, and CoQ is indispensable for cellular energy.

Armstrong: Questions about quality, history, and effectiveness. However, the right questions require the right knowledge. For example, if doctors don't know that the majority of so-called "natural" vitamin E is not truly natural, they will likely be unable to determine whether or not a product is really a high-quality product. Thus, it depends on the product in question. A good question when choosing a vitamin E product is, "How much of the total tocopherol complex is in each capsule?"

Wilson: Is this a quality product? Supplements are unregulated—there are no minimum standards. The only way to be "reasonably assured" is having a qualified outside group audit the manufacturer. The Natural Products Association, (www.naturalproductsassoc.org) is the oldest and largest industry association, and it has a GMP audit—all the nutritional companies that have passed inspection are listed on its Web site. Most companies have never had an outsider verify their manufacturing, so you're left trusting corporate marketing. Some nutritional products are made in pharmaceutical facilities that are subject to mandatory federal law compliance, which is the only guaranteed quality.

Fawcett: Is it free from colloids, fat, cholesterol, preservatives, additives, synthetics, wheat, gluten, soy, corn, yeast, milk, egg, nuts, caffeine, animal products, fish and crustacean products, and anything artificial? Is it a liquid? Is it heat or cold processed? Heat kills much of the nutritional value.

What are some of the latest supplement product developments that your company is working on?

DeLuca: At Biotics Research, we are constantly working on new-product development, as well as improving our existing product offerings. After all, "Research" is not just part of our name. It's part of our corporate culture. Examples of new products include our BioPause AM and BioPause PM formulations for women in their transitional phase of life. The clinical feedback on these products has been tremendous. Other examples would be our Bio-Detox Packs and our NutriWell Packs. These are packaged to make their use patient-friendly, thereby improving patient compliance. An example of improving existing products would be ADHS, which focuses on adrenal function.

Armstrong: We are excited about several new products that we are working on to address several important needs in the supplement industry. These new innovative products are "top secret" and will be released in 2007, so keep an eye on us. Also, we are currently on the last stages of our new UNIQUE E practitioner bottle, which will help distinguish and highlight the doctor. This new bottle shows our continued support for the health professional. After finding out that more than 90% of doctors who use UNIQUE E do so based on another doctor's recommendation, we wanted to produce this new exclusive look and feel as a small way to say thank you to health practitioners.

Wilson: As a conservative chiropractic-focused company, we work on products based on what chiropractors are seeing in their offices. We focus on a limited group of core supplements, but in specialized items there is currently a real concern with diabetes/obesity, inflammation, and overactive immune systems that have us researching novel nutritional approaches.

Fawcett: Drucker Labs will soon release the liquid 160 ingredients with intraCELL™ V Technology—intraKID™ raspberry flavor multivitamin/mineral that is exclusively for newborns to 12-year-olds. We recently came out with 2-ounce travel bottles, since intraMAX™ must be refrigerated after opening.

Reference

1. The Council for Responsible Nutrition. Supplement use remains strong; consumer confidence declining, shows new Ipsos-Public Affairs survey. Available at: www.crnusa.org/PR06_CRN_CCsurvey091806.html. Accessed October 3, 2006.

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