

# EU DIRECTIVES

## Through the eyes of a British Citizen & Natural Health Shop Owner

By Danielle Bryant

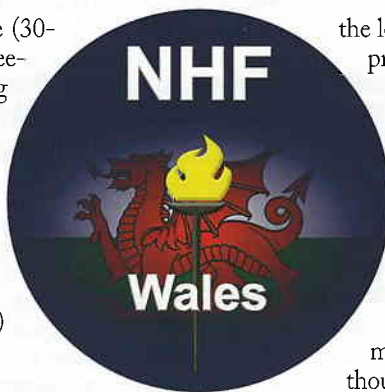
Having lived in the United Kingdom all my life (30-something years and counting!), I have enjoyed the freedom to choose how I maintain my health. Owning a Natural Health shop specializing in alternative health and innovative health products, and being a Nutritional Therapist, I therefore know how important high-quality supplementation and nutrition is today; and the power that we now have to choose how we maintain our health in the way that we wish is of paramount importance to me. However, the imminent introduction of two European Union (EU) Directives is threatening this freedom.

They come in the name of the EU Directive for Dietary Supplements and the EU Directive for Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products. There are differing laws regarding natural health products throughout the EU. Here in the UK we are seemingly having much more freedom at the moment. We can sell 1000mg Vitamin C, there are abundant Traditional Chinese Herbalists in most towns and cities, and we can buy health foods such as Himalayan salt with no problems at all. In contrast, the upper safety level of Vitamin C in France, for example, is 200mg and Himalayan Salt is banned from sale in Denmark, where it has become an "under the counter" product. These Directives plan to level the playing field throughout the EU, but the proposals are still anti-natural health and pro-pharmaceuticals.

The EU Supplements Directive has come into effect as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009 but still has "holes" in it – yet when it eventually fully arrives, this Directive will greatly restrict the maximum dosage levels of the vitamin and mineral supplements available, and they will be in the main controlled by the pharmaceutical companies. This is not a maybe – the Directive was passed and agreed upon for implementation beginning July 31, 2005. The deadline for full implementation was the end of 2009, but there were so many protests and disagreements regarding what is the maximum safety limits of vitamins and minerals that certain parts of the Directive are still unsettled.

Personally, I am wondering whether this failure to reach an agreement could be influenced by the failure of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to set Nutritional Reference Values (NRVs which are used to set Recommended Daily Allowances for supplements), which was thanks to Scott Tips for speaking out at the Codex Commission meeting in Chile recently. The EU is not "Codex Compliant" (yet), so it would appear that this is a completely different issue, and the values under discussion are different; however, it seems strange to me that these unrelated committees have both failed to reach agreed levels of supplementation.

The EU Directive for Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products is due to be implemented after April 2011. It states that any herb that claims therapeutic properties will be illegal unless it is on an "approved list." In order to be on the approved list it will need to be strictly tested and controlled in accordance with pharmaceutical-industry standards, undergoing virtually the same testing that drugs endure. This is bad news on many levels. We already know that these corporations are businesses seeking to preserve their government-endorsed privileged positions. Is it in their best interests to keep their competition, that is, natural herbal products, on the market? Of course not. On another level, herbal products do not work in the same way as allopathic medicines, so they should not be tested in the same way. And who in the herbal-medicine field actually has the money and guts to take



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the lead and pay for the testing required when these natural products cannot be patented and the expenses recouped?

It is uncertain how far this Directive will go in sweeping away herbal medicines. The EU is being quite secretive and there seems to be no hard-fact information about what is actually going to be affected. Herbs used in Traditional Chinese Medicine, Ayurveda, and the like will be affected to the extent that they make therapeutic claims, but it is unclear what the immediate spill-over effect will be upon aromatherapy, homeopathy, and certain health foods, although the general consensus is that anything that is to be sold with health or medical claims will become illegal unless specifically approved by the government. It has also been suggested that herbs such as lavender may even be illegal to grow in our own gardens. Maybe this is what eventually will happen if we let it; however, at the moment growing herbs may be the only sure way we will be able to obtain them once the Directive comes in, although herbal supplements, herbs in food form, and those dispensed by licensed herbalists are supposed to remain untouched as well.

Our health shop has been visited on five occasions this year by Trading Standards and the Medical Health Regulatory Authority regarding what we are allowed to say and what we are allowed to sell – and the "advice" given is seemingly in line with what one can expect of their eradication of our health freedom. Whether or not these visits are truly related to this eradication of our health freedom, suspiciously they are happening to my husband's and my business in the midst of all this new legislation.

Personally, I have tried contacting my MP (Member of Parliament), AM (Assembly Member), MEP (Member of European Parliament), and even local councilors regarding the EU Directives and Codex Alimentarius, all to no avail – since realizing first hand that they have no power and are privy to constant "buck-passing" with no-one taking responsibility.

Manipulation of the media is causing increasing bad press about holistic medicines and natural health and in turn propagandizing a gullible population. So when people hear about new laws restricting our health freedoms, they think it is for their protection. Also, the manipulated, failing economy gives EU residents the distraction of financial hardship. Everyone seems so caught up in their own problems, they have neither the energy nor the motivation to research what is *really* happening – and so commonly said to me when I try to pass on the important information of this legislation is "I have enough to worry about."

All the while the clock is ticking and before we know it will be too late, so we need to be persistent in getting our message across to encourage people to take action and empower themselves with the ancient wisdom that has been forgotten. 

*Danielle Bryant is a Yoga Teacher, Reiki Master/Teacher, and has recently become qualified as a Nutritional Therapist. She owns and runs a mail-order Natural Health shop with her husband, Lloyd, and sometimes with the help of their three children! They are based in South Wales, UK and are trying to promote natural holistic health and health freedom in their community and nationwide through their online business and shop newsletter. See [www.shopholistic.co.uk](http://www.shopholistic.co.uk).*