

DAN BURTON, INDIANA,
CHAIRMAN

BENJAMIN A. GILMAN, NEW YORK
CONSTANCE A. MORELLA, MARYLAND
CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, CONNECTICUT
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, FLORIDA
JOHN M. MCHUGH, NEW YORK
STEPHEN HORN, CALIFORNIA
JOHN L. MICA, FLORIDA
THOMAS M. DAVIS, VIRGINIA
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA
JOE SCARBOROUGH, FLORIDA
STEVEN C. LATOURETTE, OHIO
BOB BARR, GEORGIA
DAN MILLER, FLORIDA
DOUG OSE, CALIFORNIA
RON LEWIS, KENTUCKY
JO ANN DAVIS, VIRGINIA
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS, PENNSYLVANIA
DAVE WELDON, FLORIDA
CHRIS CANNON, UTAH
ADAM H. PUTNAM, FLORIDA
C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER, IDAHO
EDWARD L. SCHROCK, VIRGINIA
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TENNESSEE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
FACSIMILE (202) 225-3974
MINORITY (202) 225-5051
TTY (202) 225-6852

www.house.gov/reform

September 10, 2001

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA,
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

TOM LANTOS, CALIFORNIA
MAJOR R. OWENS, NEW YORK
EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, PENNSYLVANIA
PATSY T. MINK, HAWAII
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, NEW YORK
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO
ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH, ILLINOIS
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS
JOHN F. TIERNEY, MASSACHUSETTS
JIM TURNER, TEXAS
THOMAS H. ALLEN, MAINE
JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY, ILLINOIS
WM. LACY CLAY, MISSOURI
DIANE E. WATSON, CALIFORNIA

BERNARD SANDERS, VERMONT,
INDEPENDENT

Bernard A. Schwetz, D.V.M., Ph.D.
Acting Principal Deputy Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane, Room 1471
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Dr. Schwetz:

I am writing regarding dietary supplements containing ephedrine alkaloids and the use of these supplements by athletes.

Recent press accounts have reported the deaths of at least eleven football players this year, including six high school students, three college players, and two professional players during or immediately following football games or practices. Some news accounts have questioned whether dietary supplements containing ephedrine may have played a role in several of these deaths. Ephedrine can cause heart arrhythmias and stroke. It can also be particularly dangerous for athletes training in the summer because it can contribute to heatstroke.

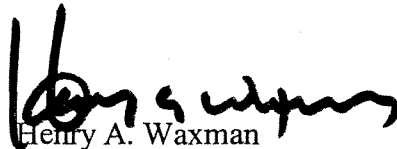
As you are aware, the Food and Drug Administration has received over 1400 reports of adverse events relating to dietary supplements containing ephedrine. These reports include events such as myocardial infarction and stroke, which have been documented in the scientific literature as possible side effects of ephedrine. Data from poison control centers show an increase in adverse event reports relating to dietary supplements containing ephedrine from 1997 to 1999, with about a third of the reports involving individuals under 19 years old. The National Collegiate Athletic Association has recently released a study that shows an increase of college athletes admitting to ephedrine use, with now close to 4% admitting to use.

Given that ephedrine use is on the rise among young athletes, FDA should expeditiously investigate reports that the death of some athletes may be related to ephedrine use. I urge you to investigate those deaths where there is evidence of supplement use to determine whether or not ephedrine, or any other dietary supplement or drug, played any role whatsoever in these deaths.

Bernard A. Schwetz, D.V.M., Ph.D
September 10, 2001
Page 2

If you have any questions about this request, please call me or Sarah Despres of my staff at (202) 225-5420.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry A. Waxman". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member

cc: The Honorable Dan Burton