



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF ORIENTAL MEDICINE

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Mar 31, 2003 16:42:10 WVS# 04  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
CORRESPONDENCE  
CONTROL CENTER

March 11, 2003

Tommy Thompson  
Office of the Secretary  
Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson:

As President of the American Association of Oriental Medicine (AAOM), I am writing to express the support of the AAOM for your recent concerns regarding the misuse of *Ephedra Sinensis*, the botanical name for the Chinese herb, Ma Huang. As you know, ephedrine, which is one of the active ingredients in the Chinese herb Ma Huang, is not traditionally used for weight loss or sports activity enhancement. The AAOM and its members warn our patients that to use the drug ephedrine or to use *Ephedra Sinensis* for these purposes can create serious physical consequences and should only be used under the guidance of a medical provider or oriental Medicine provider. It is also significant to note that the investigation of certain over-the-counter supplements reveals that they contain synthetic ephedrine or pseudo ephedrine which are not derived from the herb Ma Huang. Also, each of the cases we studied involved individuals self-medicating at very high dosages.

Ma Huang (Ephedra) is a commonly used herb by practitioners of Oriental Medicine who are the only health care practitioners who have received specialized, nationally accredited training, and have passed a national certification examination process in herbal medicine. Ma Huang's use for the effective treatment of asthma, other respiratory diseases, and additional specific illnesses is well documented, and is not generally recommended by oriental Medicine practitioners for weight loss or energy enhancement. I am sure you are aware that Suffolk County in New York recently banned the over the counter sales of supplements containing ephedra, but wisely included an exemption for Oriental Medicine providers.

The Board of Directors of the AAOM understands that the FDA has a difficult job regulating 'nutritional' supplements that are sold over the counter. Nevertheless, the

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effort to warn the public about the misuse of ephedrine supplements is an important first step. We also would ask that your office advise the public to consult an Oriental Medicine practitioner or a physician if they have any concerns about the proper use of ephedra or Ma Huang. Informing the public about the adverse events that could result from its improper use is important. It certainly should not be used except under the supervision of a physician or an Oriental Medicine practitioner.

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Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gene Bruno', written in a cursive style.

Gene Bruno, OMD  
AAOM President

Cc: Dr. Cesar Aristeiguieta

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