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A Note From Dr. Leung

Why am I writing this newsletter? I don't even like to write and I am a slow writer. But the following two of my favorite quotes will provide a clue: (1) An agitator in the washing machine gets the dirt out; and (2) Optimism is a state of mind that allows a teakettle to sing while in hot water up to its neck.

I have no idea who were responsible for these sayings. The first one is from the hippie era of the sixties, which a good friend of mine has framed above his desk, while the second is from a fortune cookie that I have kept in my wallet for a number of years now. The two together symbolize my philosophy and way of life.

For over twenty years I have been advocating product integrity and quality in the herbal industry and have been an out-spoken critic in this field. My problem is that I can't keep my mouth shut whenever I see truth being twisted or unethical conduct in business or government. This often puts me into direct conflict with the offenders, about which I could care less. It also at times gets me into disfavor among my colleagues who then consider me an "agitator" because I have rocked the boat. I don't blame them because their hands are tied as their livelihood depends on financial support from these companies. However, being a perpetual optimist, I sincerely believe my actions have made a positive contribution to the quality of commercial products over the years, as well as correcting certain misinformation (or lack of information) on Chinese herbs such as the different nature between American and Asian ginseng and that between raw and cured fo-ti. So, I continue to "sing" like the teakettle, trusting my message will eventually get across.

The title "*Leung's (Chinese) Herb News*" originally had no parenthesis. It was retroactively added, because the information in LCHN on Chinese herbs applies to other healing systems as well, especially when it relates to research methods. Also, in the Bio, the database was changed to "prototype" because I had thought I could continue to build it with money from other sources, but it didn't happen. But the fact is that my proposal had won the 2nd Phase of the contract because funding was recommended by the technical reviewers, yet NCI did not fund it because it was obviously not meant for me; and the funding was for one million dollars! [See the chapter on **NCI SBIR Phase II Contract, What if?** in my Memoir simultaneously published]

Anyhow, much of my thinking and serious efforts have gone into this Newsletter during the 8-year period, resulting in a total of 42 issues. I consider it one of my most important career achievements as it has addressed most of the important aspects of herbs and herbal products, especially the so-far common misconception of the refrain: "modern drug therapy is scientific and evidence-based, but traditional medicine is nonscientific and anecdotal". Unfortunately, my honest, frank language has offended some people in the dietary supplement business, especially those who entered it for the easy money they could make. They did and then left after they got caught or their 'herbal' supplements became too hot to handle, like ephedrine, the drug, for example. Either way, some became multimillionaires and left the business while others still remain to exert much financial clout to maintain the status quo.

Still, my Newsletter has had a positive impact on the identity and quality of herbal products since its first issue appeared 21 years ago despite the fact that it had a limited subscription base that at no time reached more than 200 or so actual subscribers. Perhaps a third of which were laymen who found out about it through word-of-mouth, and the rest being mid- to high-level scientists in key positions in government, industry, and academia. Furthermore, many more such technical experts received it as complimentary subscriptions. During the time LCHN was published (1996-2004), it was in print form, sent out by snail mail. Although later we put it online on our website, we never tried seriously to market it. Still, it was quite widely known in the trade.

The Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) was passed in October of 1994 to allow consumers to continue to use herbs as an alternative to toxic drugs before the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) would start regulating them as such. However, since day one, they have been treated as drugs and their identity and quality determined using technologies developed specifically for drugs but not appropriate for complex herbs. It's an oxymoron.

Here, we have these legally regulated foods, yet we insist on treating them as drugs. That is no different than insisting on testing malic acid in apple and call malic acid apple, or testing a ginsenoside (among many) in ginseng and call that ginseng. It is obvious neither chemical is the food or herb. Consequently, we have never resolved the herb identity and quality problem up to this day, almost 2018!

Without a clear definition of what herbal supplements are, research in herbs continues to generate meaningless, or at best, ambiguous results. Hence, as far as I know, all research on traditional herbs designed to verify their traditional values (e.g., safety & efficacy), no matter how well-known the scientific researchers, has yielded such results. The reason is that none of such research has used a clearly identified herbal material. It is invariably assumed that some chemical in the herb accounts for all (or most) of its traditional attributes and standardized to that chemical. The same goes with research investigating the toxicity of traditional herbs or herbal formulas. None has used a holistically well-defined herbal material. Some of such research may indeed use traditional formulas, but the herbs making up the formulas are seldom correctly identified, making the formulas themselves unreproducible, hence yielding inconsistent results.

During these past 2 decades, I have had a gut feeling that if my LCHN could reach the general public, it would understand my honest and earnest message, despite my blunt language

(toned down somewhat in the republished version), and the word would spread. Also during this period and thereafter, I have observed that the players in the dietary/herbal supplements industry have changed. More and more are gravitating towards easy-money making by more cleverly manipulating the DSHEA towards selling chemicals disguised as herbal supplements that may be legal but not necessarily ethical. This was discovered by chance in early 2015 by the New York Attorney General when analyzing dietary supplements using DNA barcode testing, but that would not detect the chemicals from these 'herbal' supplements. However, soon after the news broke, one company settled with the NYAG that it would henceforth test all its herbal materials with DNA barcodes. But then what? How would it make its finished herbal supplements meet the test because during extraction and manufacturing, most of the herbs' DNA would be destroyed? Its most likely options are two: It either has to switch all its products to raw herbs in capsules and tablets or add some small amounts (I call it 'fairy dust') of powdered raw herbs to its existing 'herbal' product line, just to show they contain some herbal DNA. This shows the whole industry is market driven which sometimes borders on the ridiculous. But the general public doesn't know this.

During just the past 5 years, many supply companies in China and some in India are selling purer and purer chemicals from herbs which they market as herbal extracts. Now, at times when I read publications dealing with this issue, my instinct is to write something about it for the public. But then I quickly realize that it was already discussed in my Newsletter. In fact, many of the problems addressed in the LCHN, although still relevant, are unresolved today! And the confusion between dietary supplements and herbal supplements continue to be a major problem. Few people know that it's the imprecise language in the DSHEA which has mostly caused this confusion that has enabled sloppy research and shoddy products to exist and persist. Therefore, I have decided to republish LCHN along with my Memoir to show consumers what has been going on during the past 25 years with genuine herbal products that are supposed to serve as a safer-and milder-acting alternative to conventional toxic drugs. Instead, true herbal supplements are rapidly trending towards chemicals (drugs) sold 'legally' as dietary supplements.

In my 2 books, you can find most issues and problems leading to this trend already discussed, 20 some years ago. Yet nothing has been done by my scientific colleagues, because many of their hands are tied, or simply so brainwashed by 'modern' science that they are blind to the alternative, as I was up until about 15 years ago. In both books, I have included a glossary and abbreviation of terms routinely used in my field but may not be immediately obvious to the general public to make them easier to read and understand.

If you are taking these supplements, you need to consider this question: What exactly are herbal supplements? If you don't know the answer, you need to buy my 2 books or somehow have access to them, because you can only find the honest answers there. Elsewhere, you are most likely to find promotional advertisements of someone's products, but often with little truth.

In both the electronic and republished versions of the LCHN, the comprehensive Index does not reference the actual pages. Rather, only the issue number is referenced. So, at least you can pinpoint a topic down to the issue level. By the way, I would like to call the Index 'raw' but comprehensive because it was mostly compiled by part-time high-school seniors and college students, unedited, including my younger daughter when she was home on vacation.

On the Internet, there are many discussions on any topic by anyone with the intention of marketing something or seeing their names in print. At the end of each article, most of the times you are asked to sign something for a cause or to buy some product. That's fine, as you can always simply exit if you don't agree with, or like, either spiel. However, sometimes the spiel is so convincing and tempting that you are mesmerized by it but still not convinced, because you don't know the people behind the marketing, even though some may have stellar credentials on paper. It's a real dilemma. Finally, you may take a gamble by trying one. If it doesn't work, try

another. It's no different than doctors choosing drugs and trying them on patients, if one doesn't work, try another. Unfortunately, their primary source of information is from Big Pharma's salesmen or reading the fine prints in drug package inserts, just like that of most consumers' is from ads or a myriad of confusing books promoting products. It's sad that educated people worldwide, including Americans, have bought the Big Pharma line that modern drugs are scientific, and traditional medicines are not. [see chapter on **What's Wrong with Drugs & Herbal Supplements** in my Memoir]

In the era of fake news and fake science, big money behind 'marketing' can sell anything. This is a serious problem. I don't have any money to pour into 'marketing' nor have I the ethical looseness often needed to be successful in it. All I have is my passion to see TCM properly modernized to be part of our world healthcare. I also want to see appropriate scientific technologies used in our modern drug development and therapy process so that new drugs can be developed and produced safer and more effective, without continuing to generate toxic side-effects leading to new drug-caused diseases in a perpetual vicious cycle for consumers.

I almost had a chance to start to properly modernize Chinese medicine and bring it to the modern world in the early 2000's, but unfortunately the powerful influence of Big Pharma & Company on Chinese scientists and on marketing Chinese herbs with expediency was so entrenched that it quickly pushed them towards drugs. And I actually was the key scientist to try to steer it towards true modernization (with retention of its tradition). [see chapter on **Proper Modernization of Chinese Medicine** in my Memoir]

My Memoir and LCHN, together, are expressions of the thoughts and actions of my unique self, my character and intellect, from childhood to adulthood. They have also helped shape my thinking and acquisition of appropriate sciences (as opposed to just any science) when applying them to traditional Chinese herb research and modernization. They can provide a glimpse of why and how a private person like me has had no reservations in criticizing powerful industries like Big Pharma and dishonest but ubiquitous marketers that sell fake or adulterated products, cheating and exploiting the public. This is because I am familiar with what traditional Chinese herbal medicine (TCHM) can do. I have experienced it since childhood and occasionally still use some of its well-known traditional formulas. As a scientist brought up in a TCHM environment, I understand its potential in world healthcare. So, I value its millennia of safe and effective practice, and I can't help lashing out at whomever exploiting it or trying to destroy it for his/her personal gain.

Due to the at-times politically and socially incorrect writing style of my 2 books, I doubt any big corporate publisher would be willing to handle them. So, I have decided to self-publish them and market them through social media on the Internet, hopefully a consumer like you can see their value and help spread the word to start this process. I'll let my fellow-consumers decide the fate of these 2 books, genuine herbal supplements, and TCHM. The results would be whether or not we continue to let Big Pharma perpetuate the current 'sick-care' system, obliterating true herbal supplements and replacing them with more chemical drugs (called dietary supplements that need not go through the usual drug approval process), while subtly and quietly put TCHM in historical museums. In any case, I have put my thoughts down on paper. The rest is not up to me.

However, if there are enough of you who care about a better natural health with fewer drugs and also want to do your part to achieve it, I have a group of experts and a first-rate lab ready and willing to form a non-profit organization to analyze suspicious herbal supplements and to regularly report our findings to you. As consumers of herbal supplements, you can then have appropriate information to buy the right one(s). But one last thing I want to remind you, labels on 'herbal' supplements don't tell the truth despite the fact that there now exists a Dietary Supplement Label Database (DSLDB) compiled by the National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS). It does not apply to herbal supplements, only

chemical or regular dietary supplements based on some analyzable and definable chemicals. [see the chapter on **DSL** – **Not For Herbal Supplements** in my Memoir]

To publicize various issues regarding toxic drugs and true herbal supplements as alternative to them, I'll start republishing online some comments or discussions from LCHN to highlight what has remained the same for decades and needs to be changed. I urge you to also buy my Memoir so that you can understand where I am coming from and why I do things that wiser men may not even try.

I am almost 80 years old. These books would have been published 2 years ago, except for a traffic accident that has set me back a couple of years. The tremendous rear-ender by a large SUV Tahoe on my Volvo XC-70 at a traffic light, totaled both vehicles and I am still not done with mental rehabilitation, though I am perhaps physically 80% my old self. If not for my Volvo whose steel cage was moved almost half-an-inch forward by the impact, I would have been probably dead and would not be here writing my Memoir today. Anyway, I don't think I'd go riding again either, so I have just given away my snowboard equipment that I last used the winter before that traffic accident. If I survive another few years without worsening vision and anger problems that greatly slow me down, that trauma and the dealing with our healthcare system where MD's keep pushing drugs on their patients, and insurance-company hassles, will be the subject of my next book.

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