


[ABOUT TMA](#)
[RELATED ORGANIZATIONS](#)
[CALENDAR](#)
[SITE MAP](#)
[CONTACT US](#)

 Path: [Home](#) : [News Room](#) : [News Releases](#) : [Public Health and Science](#)

Dietary Supplements Should Spur Doctor-Patient Discussions

Keywords: [Obesity](#) [Public Health](#)
Contact: Ken Ortolon
phone: (512) 370-1392
cell: (512) 569-9613
e-mail: ken.ortolon@texmed.org
Contact: Brent Annear
phone: (512) 370-1381
cell: (512) 656-7320
e-mail: brent.annear@texmed.org

An apple a day keeps the doctor away, but one physician says the use of nutritional supplements should bring the doctor and patient closer together.

Moshe Frenkel, MD, said the prevalence of supplements on supermarket shelves and their widespread use • especially among senior citizens • means doctors and patients must examine together the health issues of taking supplements.

"It's time to end the silence • put it all out on the table," Dr. Frenkel told physicians attending TexMed 2005, the Texas Medical Association's convention, Saturday. Dr. Frenkel is an assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine at The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston.

TexMed2005 is being held through Saturday at the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center in Grapevine.

According to Dr. Frenkel's studies, some 20,000 nutritional supplements are sold in the U.S. Close to 20 percent of the population uses such products as glucosamine, melatonin, and fish oil. Patients turn to such drugs • called complementary or alternative medicines • because of claims that they help the common cold, arthritis, and depression, among others conditions and maladies.

Although many supplements lack approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, annual sales since 1988 have risen from \$14 billion to \$27 billion, and senior citizens are increasingly good customers. Use of supplements among those over age 65 has doubled, Dr. Frenkel said.

Most of the use is self-initiated and without physician approval. That's a major concern since the health of seniors is involved, Dr. Frenkel said.

The paradox is that, while scientific studies are often inconclusive, some supplements do provide marginal health benefits. But the hype on supplements from advertising and hearsay has led the general public to believe supplements help you live longer. Dr. Frenkel said studies show that users would continue using the dietary supplements even if scientific tests proved they are of absolutely no benefit.

"This is a major concern because some supplements are okay, but others may have harmful effects and bring side effects," he said.

His advice to physicians: "We should give informed advice. We should sit with our patients and discuss the different supplements being used, why they are used, and whether there's reason they shouldn't be used."

[SEARCH TMA SITE](#)
[FIND A PHYSICIAN](#)
[MEMBER LOG-IN](#)
[JOIN OR RENEW](#)
[HOT TOPICS](#)
[GOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS](#)
[PRACTICE
MANAGEMENT](#)
[MEMBERSHIP](#)
[LEGAL
INFORMATION](#)
[KNOWLEDGE
CENTER](#)
[CME](#)
[PUBLIC HEALTH
& SCIENCE](#)
[NEWS ROOM](#)
[CLASSIFIEDS](#)
[LINKS](#)
[MEDEM](#)
[PHYSICIAN'S NEWS
DIGEST](#)
[TMA JOB BANK](#)

The issues of concern include whether the supplement contains a non-recommended level of certain vitamin and nutritional additions, whether the supplement adversely interacts with prescribed drugs, and whether the supplement manufacturer is appropriately educating the person taking the drug.

Doctors consulting with their patients should ask:

- What supplements are their patients taking?
- What are the ingredients?
- What do scholarly journals and other credible information sources say?
- What side effects and drug interactions may occur?
- What are the proper dosages?

Three specific supplements are popular with seniors. Lutein, which claims to bolster failing eyesight, is similar in nutritional value to spinach, broccoli, and collard greens. Glucosamine, a sulfate common in shellfish, is synthetically manufactured and claims to slow the progression of osteoarthritis. Chondroitin allegedly helps both joints and eye dysfunctions.

With all supplements, however, the message is clear, Dr. Frenkel said. "There can be positive and negative effects on the patient, but the difficulty is bringing it up with the doctor and looking at it as they would any medicine."

Dr. Frenkel claims seniors can often get the same, if not better, nutritional value by eating the right foods.

TMA is the largest state medical society in the nation, representing more than 40,000 physician and medical student members. It is located in Austin and has 120 component county medical societies around the state. Tam's key objective since 1853 is to improve the health of all Texans.

-- 30 --

Last Published: 5/14/2005

[E-mail this page](#) [Print this page](#)

TMA: 401 West 15th Street, Austin TX 78701 Ph: (800) 880-1300, (512) 370-1300

Copyright 1999-2005 Texas Medical Association All Rights Reserved

[TMA Web site](#) [Privacy Statement](#) [TMA Contacts](#) [How to Find It](#)

[RSS Feeds](#) Font Size: [A](#) [A](#)