MedicalXpress

FDA must regulate nutritional supplements, experts say

April 8 2015, by Rachel Stern And Ellen Goldbaum

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration must hold companies to a higher standard when it comes to herbal supplements, said Edward Bednarczyk, University at Buffalo pharmacy practice chair, PharmD.

After the New York State attorney general's office accused GNC and three other major retailers of selling contaminated or fraudulent herbal supplements last month, GNC agreed to put into place new testing procedures.

"It is the wild, wild West when it comes to botanicals and other nutritional supplements," Bednarczyk said. "I think this is a strong signal to the FDA to start holding companies to a higher standard on the whole herbal side."

Mark O'Brian, PhD, professor and interim chair of the Department of Biochemistry in the University at Buffalo School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, said the attorney general's office is, in part, responding to findings contained in a 2013 paper published journal *BMC Medicine*.

That paper analyzed 44 herbal supplements and found that only 48 percent contained what was on the label while 59 percent contained filler or contaminants not on the label.

"Of the 12 companies represented by those 44 products, three of them didn't sell any products that contained the ingredients that they claimed

were in their supplements," he said.

Further, only two of the 12 companies sold products in which all contained only what was on the label without filler, substitutions or contaminants, O'Brian said.

For Bednarczyk, the main issue is that the public is in the dark.

"These products are wildly popular. We are not dealing with fringe things here," he said. "It is possible retailers will step up, but I think the FDA must require a different set of standards. This should be happening on a federal level."

Provided by University at Buffalo