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He Details Potential Problems & How Consumers Can Protect Themselves

Of the 15 toys recalled in the United States so far this year because of the dangers they pose to children, 10 were manufactured in China.

Chinese drywall imported from 2001 to 2007 released sulfur gas that sickened homeowners and corroded wiring, air-conditioning systems and other metal surfaces. Many of those homeowners are still trying to win compensation.

In recent years, U.S. dogs and cats died from eating Chinese pet food made with melamine, and the FDA warned consumers to throw away toothpastes made in China because of the risk they included an antifreeze ingredient.

“The problem is, manufacturers, distributors and consumers alike are attracted to inexpensive goods, and in countries like China, things can be produced cheaply in part because there are fewer regulations regarding quality control,” says Joe Veilleux, president of Euromed USA (www.euromedusa.com) and a registered pharmacist.

“That’s why I warn people who buy all-natural nutritional supplements not to buy the cheapest products available. If the ingredients in them are not subject to regulatory oversight, they can be dangerous.”

The active ingredients in many natural supplements are botanicals – extracts from herbs and other medicinal plants. Some of the dangerous potential problems that can occur without rigorous quality control include:

• Contamination by pesticides and other heavy metals. Exposure to these contaminants can be hazardous to humans and can be present if growing conditions and plant materials are not carefully monitored. Manufacturers who aren’t held to government standards may not even check for contamination.

• Radiation exposure. The ground the plants are grown in may have radiation, which is absorbed by the plants. This is another contaminant for which regulated manufacturers carefully test.

• Species misidentification. Slightly different varieties of a plant may have vastly different properties. Black cohosh, for example, is a member of the buttercup family and is used to treat menopause symptoms like hot flashes. Some varieties of the genus Actaea may look similar to Actaea racemosa, but they do not have the same effect and, in fact, can be harmful.

While price can be a red flag for consumers, surprisingly, one sign that a product meets high quality standards is if it comes from a company that incorporates environmental sustainability practices, Veilleux says.

“A company that’s making an effort to address issues such as sustainability is farther along in the evolutionary process,” Vielleux explains. “A company’s first mission will be to provide the best quality of product it can. Once it has achieved that, it looks to improve in other ways, including sustainability, reducing its impact on the environment and social responsibility. But it can’t get to step 2 until it has mastered step 1.”

Veilleux says a reliable sign that a company is serious about “green” issues is if it has earned ISO 14001 certification.

“ISO stands for International Standardization Organization. Its criteria can be applied and measured uniformly in countries around the world,” Vielleux says. “So whether a company’s in China or the United States, if it has ISO 14001 certification, you can be assured it takes sustainability and environmental issues seriously.”

Euromed’s factory in Barcelona earned the ISO 14001 certification in July of this year.

Another way to safeguard yourself is to buy products from major U.S. brands, such as GNC

and Whole Foods, Veilleux says.

“The big brands have a lot to lose, so they’re not as likely to take chances by obtaining their ingredients from unregulated sources,” Veilleux says. “Having their products blamed for a public health crisis would be disastrous to them.”

About Euromed USA

Euromed USA supplies standardized botanical and herbal extracts and natural active substances for use in the pharmaceutical, health food and cosmetics industries. By extracting the necessary chemicals, the company can guarantee its products meet the precise chemical specifications necessary. Euromed was founded 40 years ago. Its parent company is the 100-year-old Rottapharm-Madaus corporation based in Italy.