



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 21, 2011

Walnuts Are Drugs, Says FDA

Diamond's transgression was to make "financial investments to educate the public and supply them with walnuts," as [William Faloon of Life Extension magazine](#) put it. On its website and packaging, the company stated that the omega-3 fatty acids found in walnuts have been shown to have certain health benefits, including reduced risk of heart disease and some types of cancer. These claims, Faloon notes, are well supported by scientific research: "*Life Extension* has published 57 articles that describe the health benefits of walnuts"; and "The US National Library of Medicine database contains no fewer than 35 peer-reviewed published papers supporting a claim that ingesting walnuts improves vascular health and may reduce heart attack risk."



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This evidence was apparently not good enough for the FDA, which told Diamond that its walnuts were "misbranded" because the "product bears health claims that are not authorized by the FDA."

The FDA's letter continues: "We have determined that your walnut products are promoted for conditions that cause them to be drugs because these products are intended for use in the prevention, mitigation, and treatment of disease." Furthermore, the products are also "misbranded" because they "are offered for conditions that are not amenable to self-diagnosis and treatment by individuals who are not medical practitioners; therefore, adequate directions for use cannot be written so that a layperson can use these drugs safely for their intended purposes." Who knew you had to have directions to eat walnuts?

"The FDA's language," Faloon writes, "resembles that of an out-of-control police state where tyranny [reigns] over rationality." He adds:

This kind of bureaucratic tyranny sends a strong signal to the food industry not to innovate in a way that informs the public about foods that protect against disease. While consumers increasingly reach for healthier dietary choices, the federal government wants to deny food companies the ability to convey findings from scientific studies about their products.

Walnuts aren't the only food whose health benefits the FDA has tried to suppress. Producers of pomegranate juice and green tea, among others, have felt the bureaucrats' wrath whenever they have suggested that their products are good for people.

Meanwhile, Faloon points out, foods that have little to no redeeming value are advertised endlessly, often with dubious health claims attached. For example, Frito-Lay is permitted to make all kinds of



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claims about its fat-laden, fried products, including that Lay's potato chips are "heart healthy." Faloon concludes that "the FDA obviously does not want the public to discover that they can reduce their risk of age-related disease by consuming healthy foods. They prefer consumers only learn about mass-marketed garbage foods that shorten life span by increasing degenerative disease risk."

Faloon thinks he knows why this is the case. First, by stifling competition from makers of more healthful alternatives, junk food manufacturers, who he says "heavily lobb[y]" the federal government for favorable treatment, will rake in ever greater profits. Second, by making it less likely that Americans will consume healthful foods, big pharmaceutical companies and medical device manufacturers stand to gain by selling more "expensive cardiac drugs, stents, and coronary bypass procedures" to those made ill by their diets.

But people are starting to fight back against the FDA's tactics. "The makers of pomegranate juice, for example, have sued the FTC for censoring their First Amendment right to communicate scientific information to the public," Faloon reports. Congress is also getting into the act with a bill, the Free Speech About Science Act (H.R. 1364), that, Faloon writes, "protects basic free speech rights, ends censorship of science, and enables the natural health products community to share peer-reviewed scientific findings with the public."

Of course, if the Constitution were being followed as intended, none of this would be necessary. The FDA would not exist; but if it did, as a creation of Congress it would have no power to censor any speech whatsoever. If companies are making false claims about their products, the market will quickly punish them for it, and genuine fraud can be handled through the courts. In the absence of a government agency supposedly guaranteeing the safety of their food and drugs and the truthfulness of producers' claims, consumers would become more discerning, as indeed they already are becoming despite the FDA's attempts to prevent the dissemination of scientific research. Besides, as Faloon observed, "If anyone still thinks that federal agencies like the FDA protect the public, this proclamation that healthy foods are illegal drugs exposes the government's sordid charade."

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