
The Elixir of Eternal Life
Hatchard Report
Dr. Guy Hatchard

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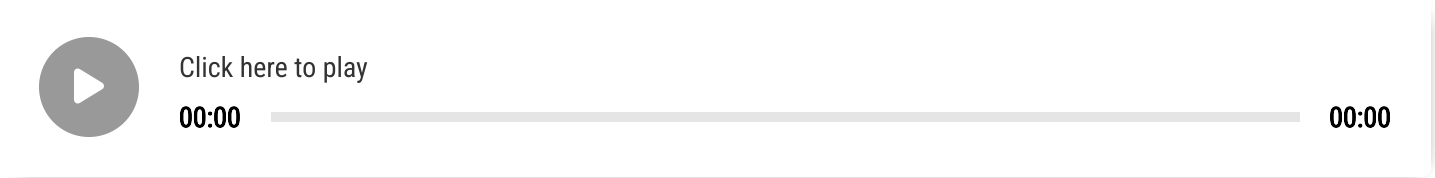
You may have seen an article in the New Zealand Herald over the weekend reprinted From the UK Telegraph entitled "Five foods doctors think kids should never eat". It contains a health warning about slushies. Researchers at the University of Dublin examined the cases of 21 children aged between 2 and 7 who needed emergency treatment after drinking a slushie. Most of the children lost consciousness and showed signs of low sugar and high acidity in their blood, four needed brain scans, and one even had a seizure.



The article labelled the culprit as *"A naturally occurring sweetener called **glycerol** which is used instead of sugar to keep the brightly coloured drink from freezing solid and give it a "slushie" texture."* In other words, glycerol is an antifreeze that does a good job in cars but not in little children. At this point in the article, I stopped reading and wondered about the words *"naturally occurring"*.

It just takes a moment on the internet to find out just how *'natural'* commercial glycerol is, a moment that I suppose the article's author could not spare. It is produced using a number of methods, none of which can be reasonably described as natural:

Hydrolysis (Fat Splitting):
In this process, fats and oils are broken down into fatty acids and glycerol by reacting them with water under pressure and high temperature.

Transesterification:
This reaction involves fats and oils reacting with an alcohol (like methanol) with a catalyst to produce fatty acid esters (like biodiesel) and glycerol.

Saponification:
Soap production through saponification (reacting fats and oils with a base like sodium hydroxide) also yields glycerol as a byproduct.

Biotechnology:

Glycerol is also produced through propylene synthesis or batch fermentation of sugar or biomass.

The glycerol obtained through these procedures contains a wide range of impurities like water, salts, organic compounds, catalysts, genetic promoters, bio-reaction controllers, etc. which need *'removing'* until the desired level of purity for the intended use is reached. Or more correctly, until the allowed level of impurity residue is achieved which unfortunately in some lax regulatory environments means *'anything goes'*. The lead author of the study published by the BMJ, Professor Ellen Crushell, a metabolic paediatrician, explains *"There's no transparency around how much glycerol is used in these drinks – it's very hard to find out that information."*

It seems that these days when it comes to food labelling, the word 'natural' has come to mean anything which exists. In other words, it has lost any meaning whatsoever.

Whilst scientists like Crushell are trying to push back against a tide of highly processed unhealthy contaminated foods, there are other people pushing hard in the other direction. It has become fashionable for CEOs caught out adulterating our traditional foods to blame conspiracy theorists. Bas Padberg is UK boss of Arla Foods which manufactures Lurpak Butter, he claims conspiracy theorists have whipped up a boycott of Lurpak by making what he calls false claims.

Lurpak is now *'trialling'* milk and butter made from cows fed Bovaer, a biosynthetic additive designed to reduce methane production. Actually *'trialling'* might be the wrong word, Lurpak quietly started selling Bovaer milk and butter into multiple markets in unnamed countries. In all, it is available for sale in 68 countries around the world. UK consumers found out, the result has been a backlash. A UK Telegraph interview found a smiling Padberg unrepentant and bullish on Bovaer:

"We can only follow the science and not opinions. Opinions that are not based on science are just opinions…We would never, ever jeopardise anything that was related to the quality and we would never, ever put our food at risk….Why would we? That would be the most stupid thing that we could do."

Well he started using the word *'stupid'*, not me.

Predictably, UK regulators have rubber stamped Bovaer, with the Food Standards Authority (FSA) saying: *"Milk from cows given Bovaer, a feed additive used to reduce methane emissions, is safe to drink."* As if the mere fact of its sale is a guarantee of its safety rather than a procedure to test long term outcomes. The issue for consumers is three-fold. Firstly it is being sold without labelling to inform consumers that it has been altered, secondly it contains novel residues whose long term health effects on both cows and humans are unknown and thirdly consumers have a right to continue to access their traditional foods.

Perhaps a parable will help explain the way ahead. Many years ago there was a thriving village community called Paradise. The villagers took their troubles to the headman who solved them with sagacity and justice. One day a medicine man dressed in rich robes arrived at the village and began selling an elixir of longevity. The innocent villagers flocked to his door to buy his delicious tasting concoction. Before too long a malady struck the village, some villagers saw the need to take more elixir while others started circulating rumours doubting the elixir. The villagers took their problems to the headman. The medicine man described the rumours as slander and asked for the culprits to be punished. He said people only needed to take more elixir. While the rumour mongers were angry and wanted the medicine man to be drummed out of town. What should the headman do? With the wisdom of Soloman he divided the villagers into two groups, those who had taken the elixir and those who refrained. Then he asked each group to describe any maladies they had suffered. Pretty soon, it became clear that the elixir was no elixir at all but a poison. Looking round, they saw the medicine man leaving in a hurry by the back door of the village hall.

Scientists discovered the double helical structure of DNA in 1953. They and others described DNA as the secret of life and promised to cure disease, extend longevity, and enhance intelligence and beauty. That happened 70 years ago and they are still in town making the same promises and doing a brisk trade. Meanwhile a malady has struck the Global Village and no one knows where it has come from. The search for answers has divided the world. The answer is as simple today as it was then, compare the long term health outcomes of those taking novel products with those not taking them.

Instead, we stand on the threshold of a new era of food permissiveness. The Gene Technology Bill in New Zealand and coordinated initiatives in countries around the world aim to exempt so-called *"new genomic techniques"* from any labelling, safety checks, monitoring and liability requirements. Read about the EU deregulation here for example. Given the five years of pandemic mayhem this is an extraordinary and dangerous response. It speaks volumes about the power of money and the level of stupidity among those leading the world, although you will appreciate that the word 'leading' is a misnomer.

I am reminded of the time I spent teaching in India as a young man in 1973, I carefully purified the water I drank to avoid catching Delhi belly. After a few months I became fed up with the purification ritual and started drinking the water. Then I really got sick. Scientists, CEOs, biotech entrepreneurs, and regulators have become fed up with GM testing. They want to push ahead and do whatever they like without any restriction. If they are allowed to do so, we will start to get very sick indeed.

If you doubt this, look to America. They have lived with a deregulated biotech environment free of labelling requirements for decades. Starting in 2012, USA became the first country in the world to suffer a decline in longevity. Despite spending more per capita on healthcare than any other country, the situation is getting worse. It might be time for the headman to divide the population into groups and start asking questions. In other words, start researching outcomes instead of listening to sales talk.

We live in an incredibly beautiful integrated ecosystem with which we exchange life giving natural genetic information via real foods. Or more simply put, we derive our health through the natural foods we ingest. There are some people seeking to make food decisions for us and replace nature's bounty with synthetic industrial bio-sludge. Their sense of self-importance, conceit and lust for money and control marks them out as stupid.

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