

## Dietary supplements: Low probability of benefit, high probability of illness

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.**

Former NBA star Lamar Odom was found unresponsive at a Nevada brothel last month. He came close to becoming yet another statistic in the body count racked up by “herbal supplements.” Odom reportedly took up to 10 tablets of “herbal Viagra,” along with other substances.

A recent [study](#) published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, continues the decades-long drumbeat of alarms about the risks of “dietary-nutritional supplements.” The researchers analyzed data from 63 hospital Emergency Rooms over a 10-year period (2004-2013), and their statistical analysis projected about 23,000 ER visits annually resulting from ingestion of supplements, about one-tenth of which led to hospitalization.

Because of irresponsible, two-decade-old legislation, the answer to the critical question, “How many Americans are killed each year due to ingestion of so-called dietary-nutritional supplements?” cannot be answered.

In 2012, the FDA issued a “guidance document,” the first step in tightening the regulations on supplement marketing. But thanks to the opposition of the industry and its supporters in Congress—especially their reliable friends, the authors of the original 1994 law, Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT)—even this attempt at minor tweaking came to naught.

Of course, FDA-approved prescription drugs are not entirely harmless either. But drugs—the real ones—have gone through extensive clinical testing to demonstrate reasonable safety and efficacy for specific indications. Supplements have no such supporting data; often, the manufacturers cannot even be sure of exactly what is in their products.

More appropriate and conscientious regulation of supplements is needed to protect consumers against deficient manufacturing practices, shoddy quality-control and outright fraud. Otherwise, patients will continue to be exposed to unacceptable risks with little benefit, and the body count will continue to rise.

**Read full, original post:** [Death By Dietary Supplement](#)