ABSTRACT

THE QUALITY OF TOP SELLING DIETARY SUPPLEMENT INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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CONTEXT: Dietary supplements in recent years become part of the daily diet considerable part of the population of all European countries. According to the survey of 2015 internet purchases through OTC drugs and dietary supplements people buys more than two fifths of the internet population aged 15-59. The internet is often used by consumers as a source of information. If people buy a dietary supplement on the internet they get all information about a dietary supplement is from the web sites.

OBJECTIVE: To assess quality of information presented on the Internet for the top selling dietary supplements from the clinical and regulatory point of view.

METHODS: We searched the Internet using the 3 most commonly used search engines in the Czech Republic - Seznam, Google and Centrum starting July of 2015 till November of 2015. One-hundred top selling dietary supplements in the Czech Republic in 2014 were extracted from IMS Health database. Dietary supplement information was evaluated from the clinical and regulatory point of view.

RESULTS: One-hundred and ninety one web portals were evaluated, of which 25 were excluded. In total, 166 web portals were analysed. The average regulatory (6 criteria) and clinical (10 criteria) score was 3,83 and 3,82, respectively. Nine percent of webpages (73 from 775 webpages) contained dietary supplement information referring to the treatment, cure or prevention of disease and symptoms and were considered as a serious misconduct.

CONCLUSIONS: The quality of information on dietary supplements sold via internet may vary and may not be always reliable. A consumer should consult a pharmacist before using a dietary supplement in order to be fully informed about its proper use.