

## We Get Letters & E-Mail

Editorial Staff

Ephedra Issue Still Undecided

Dear Editor:

At the time of this writing (Jan. 23, 2004), it is too soon for anyone to say for sure how the new FDA rule on ephedra will impact the acupuncture community, because the rule has not been released yet. What we know from the FDA Web site is the following:

"The rule does not pertain to traditional Chinese herbal remedies. It generally doesn't apply to products like herbal teas that are regulated as conventional foods."

This is a good thing. The message is that the safety of using *ma huang* in small doses, combined with other herbs in a formula, as recommended by a practitioner trained in its use has been recognized by the Food and Drug Administration. In the opinion of many advocates in our field, this is very good news indeed for our profession.

The FDA entertains comments on an issue well before the ruling is issued. The comment period for ephedra closed in April 2003. At that time many acupuncture organizations and herb associations, including the American Herbal Products Association and the Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Alliance, requested exemption from an ephedra ban for trained, licensed practitioners, based on our long history of safe use, and it looks as though we were heard. (Note: the FDA regulates some of the products, but not health professionals themselves.) There is a 60-day congressional review period after the rule is published, which will hopefully be within a week or two, but the rule on ephedra is essentially complete, and acupuncturists might like it the way it is.

You can still contact your legislator and tell them your views on this and other issues. Find his or her e-mail address, and tell your legislator how important it is that trained health care professionals retain access to herbs. Tell them about our record of safety and our important contribution to health care. And if you want to talk about current issues, let them know that you would appreciate their support for S 1538 which would provide research monies for herbs through the National Institutes of Health, or HR 1477, which provides eligible patients access to acupuncture through Medicare and the Federal Employee Health Benefits program. Let's keep the good news coming. To find your legislator, go to [www.congress.org/congressorg/home](http://www.congress.org/congressorg/home).

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Chair, Herb Committee, AOM Alliance

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Acupuncture Today welcomes your feedback. If you would like to respond to an article, please send

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