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News

TGA targeted by 60 Mins 11.02.2019

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Blackmores has struck out at Channel Nine's 60 Minutes for a report it aired last night (Sunday) which implied one of the company's products almost resulted in a woman requiring a liver transplant.

Blackmores CEO Richard Henfrey was interviewed by 60 Minutes reporter Liz Hayes, along with TGA national manager and deputy secretary for the Health Products Regulation Group, John Skerritt, after being told the segment was on the growth of the complementary industry in Australia.

However, when told the only other people interviewed were known pharma critics such as newly appointed Friends of Science and Medicine [president Ken Harvey](#), Henfrey wrote to Nine's national director of news and current affairs Darren Wick to protest.

Titled 'The Truth about DIY Wellness', the segment showed a man reportedly given two weeks to live after drinking a green tea shake and a woman told she needed a liver transplant after taking Blackmores-branded valerian.

Despite the claims of herbal products causing liver damage, Skerritt told Hayes the TGA would not be taking any action as "there could be other medicines, genetics or enzymes" which caused the complications.

"We carefully review every ingredient that's permitted for use," he said.

Henfrey said Blackmores was denied access to the patient's medical records, age, date of commencing and ceasing the Blackmores product, date of the adverse reaction, and a list of other medicines consumed prior to the incident.

"Blackmores was advised by 60 Minutes that the patient's doctor claimed valerian was the 'culprit'," the company said. "According to the program's producer, the patient is now showing no ill effects, and her liver is now normal."

Blackmores said it had sold 80 million doses of valerian in the past 13 years with no reported adverse reactions, but had reported this incident to the TGA.

Henfrey said the company was "very keen to investigate this further" so it could "take appropriate action" if the incident was related to its product.

"Without the further information we've requested on the individual case, we are simply unable to investigate further," he said. "This is despite our strong desire to do so."

The segment concluded with Adelaide University academics calling for complementary medicine manufacturers to be made to "prove" their products were safe.

"That's what happens with drug companies, why not herbal companies?" they said.

Megan Brodie

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