



Nutrition Wisdom for the New Year! By Rebecca Morley

We often see new catchy nutrition terms used to attract consumers to buy unnecessary products. It's fun to believe in magic, but reality is usually a process of logical, integrated steps. Below, I have illustrated just one example of truth versus myth to show the need for caution. Just because something is in print and sounds scientific, doesn't mean it's true.

Truth: Proanthocyanidins (PA) are a class of phytonutrients. This class of flavonoids earned their reputation as powerful antioxidants or free radical scavengers. Free radicals damage unstable oxygen molecules that get into the body from over-exercising, stress, exposure environmental pollution. PAs help stabilize collagen and elastin, two fibrous proteins found in the connective tissues that support organs, joints, blood vessels muscle. PAs are found in many plant food sources.

Early studies on rats at Bangalore University's Department of Zoology in India, shows Proanthocyanidins had some benefits on their tiny brains. Of course this doesn't mean that our brains will see the same impact, but it will be interesting to follow human studies. Researchers concluded that PA may have a potent role in enhancing cognition in older rats. For more information go to the Medical Science Monitor, Volume 12, April 2006.



Myth: Glyconutrients (GN) is a term coined for plant sugars by supplement companies. They claim that GNs are found at the cellular level of edible plants in the form of plant sugars and are necessary for good health. We could as easily make-up words such as "amino-nutrient" or "liponutrient" and claim they are necessary to human health and we would be right. But how would this explain anything to consumers about healthy eating? Would it contribute to scientific knowledge?



Many GN supporters claim that these plant sugars have become deficient in the modern diet. They advertise that supplements provide health benefits across a wide array of disorders. The American Cancer Society states: "Available scientific evidence does not support claims that people are deficient in these sugars, or that dietary supplements containing them can prevent, treat, or cure cancer or any other disease." There are no reliable, controlled studies to show that glyconutrients provide any improvement against any medical disorder. When in doubt over food and nutrient claims, ask a registered dietitian to help sort fact from fiction and determine if a claim is even relevant to health. Maybe the claim is just another way to sell magic.

