

IgA Nephropathy Support Network

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Dockets Management Branch
HFA-305
Food & Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane, Rm 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

Docket #98N-1038

Dear FDA:

I can't believe I'm having to write this letter. As a child, I saw irradiated food at a scientific laboratory outside Chicago: it struck me then as about as appealing as the old WWII Army rations I'd found in a trunk in our attic.

Now, knowing more about the dangers of messing with Mother Nature, it strikes me as even less appealing -- and far more dangerous. So dangerous that I can't believe the FDA is contemplating its broader use.

Irradiated food is **not** something the American people are clamoring for. The drive for irradiation comes from food manufacturers trying to cut their processing costs by reducing wastage. This is a bottom-line issue having nothing to do with consumer health. It will permit sloppier handling of foods, resulting perhaps in even greater contamination of such stocks as grains by such "extras" as rodent feces. And extending shelf life is not the same as preserving nutritive value: irradiated foods will lose nutritional value in two ways, first through the process of radiation, and second through being allowed to remain available for sale long past their natural prime.

Removing the protection offered consumers by clear labelling of irradiated foods is on a par with forbidding milk producers from labelling their milk BGH-free, or permitting the sale of genetically-engineered produce without long-term studies of their effects. It's one more attempt to enrich the few at the expense of the many, and it enrages astute consumers. Nor does it do much for preserving our respect for the Food & Drug Administration, whose mission is to protect the public from just such scams.

The patients I represent have a poorly understood disorder of the immune system. Immunological disorders are on the rise, probably because the physical and emotional stresses of modern life are proving too much for our immune systems. Surely patients with IgA

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Food & Drug Administration

Nephropathy -- and the millions more with other immune-mediated diseases -- don't need one more assault upon their already overtaxed systems in the form of poisoned food.

Sincerely,



Dale M. Hellegers
President

cc: Senator Bill Specter

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