

ABSTRACT

Health food has a long history in China. In 1990s, Chinese government admitted health food officially by defining it in the law, and then established a series of standards, test programs and management methods. However, the development of health food market is fluctuant. Some investigations showed that it is those “problematic products” that impact the prosperity of health food market. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the quality supervision of post-market products, which could play a key role in ensuring people’s health, guaranteeing the steady development of the market and enlarging the market share in international market.

By comparing the health food management in China, America and Japan, and analyzing the current status of market and change in policy, we draw the conclusion that establishing a quality re-evaluation system of Chinese health food is necessary. Using experience of quality management in food and drug for reference, we advance that the safety and functionality should be proofed by instrument inspection, practical effect and systematic evaluation. Besides, we also suggest that government, enterprises and guides should definite their duties.

Although there are distinct differences between America and Japan in definition and approval procedure on health food, both of them have powerful market supervision system. American government manages all the label, advertisement through the cooperation of FDA and FTC; meanwhile, advanced technology provides effective backup on quality monitoring. In Japan, there are two kinds of functional food, but both of them are under the control of a special office. The punishments on illegal enterprises are rigorous and open, forcing them controlling themselves strictly and actively. On the contrary, market supervision in China is weak, and we need to invest more attention into it to administer enterprises and improve health food quality.

Other than disordered market condition, the particular characteristics of health food compared with food and drug, and the limitation of pre-market research, such as short experiment period, incomprehensive testees and single target, call for the

re-evaluation of post-market products. Furthermore, the necessity is also enhanced by the risk during practical use and modification of health food policy.

The strategy about health food re-evaluation is considered from government, enterprises, guides and mass media. The responsibility of government is enacting regulations and regulating different departments' functions. Meanwhile, enterprises should strictly examine finished goods, and carry on further research on new develop products. Guides, as the connection between government and enterprises, should assistant the former to supervise and the latter to attest health food's safety and functionality. All of what they do should be surveiled by mass media.

Based on the research above, we put forward the conception of quality re-evaluation system of Chinese health food. The aim of this system is to re-evaluate the safety and functionality objectively; the principle is dynamic evaluation; and the main character of it is appraising health food respectively according to their own specialities. The system is constituted with safety re-evaluation and function re-evaluation. The former includes evaluation of hygiene indexes, population toxicology experiments and adverse effect appraisalment; the latter includes evaluation of functional quality indexes, nutrition indexes and outcome of practical use. Because any single method has its own deficiency, laboratory examination, population experiment, systematic evaluation and adverse effect appraisalment are all required.

In this system, government takes the leading responsibility. The setting up of a health food evaluation center is to distribute and manage all the work related to re-evaluation of post-market products. Guides, under the supervision of government, examine health food in market voluntarily, providing reference to government, and help enterprises carry through population experiment and systematic evaluation. After government making the decision, enterprises should actively implement the order, and involve in the health food re-evaluation. These three subjects should cooperate to improve the quality of health food and promote the continuable development of health food market in China.

Key words: health food; quality re-evaluation system; necessity; safety re-evaluation; function re-evaluation