



# Natural Causes: Death, Lies and Politics in America's Vitamin and Herbal Supplement Industry

*Dan Hurley*

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**A riveting work of investigative journalism that charts the rise of the dietary supplement craze and reveals the dangerous—and sometimes deadly—side of these highly popular and completely unregulated products.**

Over 60 percent of Americans buy and take herbal and dietary supplements for all sorts of reasons—to prevent illness (vitamin C), to ease depression (St. John’s wort), to aid weight loss (ephedra), to boost the memory (ginkgo biloba), and even to cure cancer (shark cartilage, bloodroot)—despite the fact that few of these “natural” supplements have been proven to be safe or effective. The vitamin and herbal supplement industry generates over \$20 billion a year by selling products that promise to cure or fix, but are produced and marketed essentially without oversight. And while the media has been quick to sensationalize the benefits of supplements, few have taken a hard look at the dangers posed by many of the remedies flooding the market today. Award-winning journalist Dan Hurley breaks the silence for the first time in *Natural Causes*.

From the snake-oil salesmen of the early twentieth century, to rise of the health food movement in the sixties and seventies, Hurley charts the remarkable growth of an industry built largely on fraud, and reveals the backroom politics that led to the passage of the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994, which effectively freed the industry from FDA oversight. In unprecedented detail, he shows how supplement manufacturers have concealed the truth about dozens of untested treatments and the shocking rise in deaths, disfigurements, and life-threatening injuries caused by products deceptively promoted as “safe and natural.” Most importantly, he provides a telling look at why, in an age of unprecedented scientific advancement, we continue to buy and believe in remedies for which little evidence exists—and why the supplements we take to promote our health may be doing far more harm than good.

As Hurley shows, the dietary supplement craze may be one of the greatest swindles ever perpetrated on the American public—one that feeds billions of dollars each year into the pockets of lobbyists, politicians, and any charlatan who wants to slap a label on a bottle and tout it as the next big “natural cure.” Blending hard facts with spellbinding personal stories, *Natural Causes* is a must-read for anyone who has ever popped a multivitamin or an herb, and provides a hard-hitting, frightening look at a cultural trend that is out of control.

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