

## Prevention Magazine, July 1998 by Dr. Steven Hall:

I would like to take exception to a recent column published in Prevention Magazine under the heading "Ask the Honest Herbalist." I believe this column was written by Varro E. Tyler of Purdue University. I would like to ask Dr. Tyler how many people he's personally monitored while they used Noni juice? Or was his column written solely from material he's read and his own beliefs?

I am a conventionally trained M.D. board certified in Family Practice who now specializes in combining the best of conventional with the best of alternative medicine.

I came in contact with Noni Juice in September of 1996. Since that time, I have witnessed its actions in over 400 of my patients, many of whom have been written off as hopeless cases by their conventional practitioners. Administered properly, I have found that Noni juice has had positive, beneficial effects in 75% of people I've recommended take it.

In his column, Dr. Tyler states "...the claims made for noni are grossly exaggerated. They are not supported by any sound scientific or clinical evidence. Few medicinal uses of the plant have been recorded." On the contrary, when I did my own research on Noni, I found dozens of references in both the medical literature and the ethnobotany literature (ref 1-10 and their respective references) documenting many medicinal uses. I think that if you were interested in looking into it, you'd find that the exaggerated claims that Dr. Tyler is objecting to are not coming from the companies marketing the juice but rather from people who are using it. Perhaps there is something to their claims. Dr. Tyler's remarks strike me as subjective and prejudicial.

He goes on to claim that "Not much is known about the chemical constituents of the fruit, except that none of them is especially active biologically." Again, I must take exception (ref 13-23). Maybe my concept of what constitutes "much" and Dr. Tyler's concept of what constitutes "much" are very different. But people have published entire theses (ref 11, 12) on the chemical constituents of noni and one in particular, damnacanthol, isolated from noni roots, was more effective than 500 other botanical isolates tested in converting cancerous cells back into normal cells (ref 24). Another constituent of Noni juice, a polysaccharide, stimulates the activity of macrophages and T-lymphocytes (ref 21, 26). These constituents are very biologically active. And Dr. Heinicke has spent a good part of his career studying another constituent, proxeronine, the precursor for an alkaloid that is absolutely essential for life (ref 25).

Dr. Tyler's final statement "Noni juice has never been proven to be useful therapeutically for any significant condition or disease" is probably the most accurate statement he made in the entire column. But even that depends on what you consider "proven." If the only proof you'll accept is double-blind placebo controlled cross-over studies, then yes, few of these have been done on noni. But that is only because the juice has only been commercially available for less than two years. Does the Polynesian 2000 years of experience with noni count for anything? The Department of Agriculture placed noni on the "Generally Regarded as Safe" list based upon government sponsored evaluations of the fruit done during WWII. This is the same list that contains other nutritional miracles such as orange juice and grape juice. So what is the harm in trying it? What health hazard is Dr. Tyler protecting

people from?

Companies that are marketing Noni juice have no desire to get it reclassified from a nutritional substance into a therapeutic substance. The regulations governing the latter are much more complex and prohibitive. So why should they pay for these double-blind studies? You know as well as anyone that pharmaceutical companies pay for the studies that "prove" their drug's effectiveness. Who pays to study herbs? The politics and economics of "medical science" are the biggest roadblocks to the study, acceptance and utilization of natural remedies in our country today. People, for the most part, are willing to embrace natural remedies. I find it surprising that Prevention Magazine uses this political and economic climate to try and defame one of the most effective and beneficial natural remedies I've seen in my career. Are you really just a front for the perpetuation of pharmaceutical domination in Health Care?

I believe that the studies will come in a matter of time, as more and more people get experience with noni juice. In fact, a few major medical centers around the country (I doubt Purdue is one) are getting interested in noni juice and starting both laboratory and clinical testing. Researchers at the University of California, Irvine, College of Medicine, for example, have found that noni juice is a potent stimulator of NK killer cells, a quality that may be useful in HIV infections. Clinical studies are being organized now (ref 26). And I believe that the studies will validate my and other practitioners' experiences with noni.

I have been practicing medicine now for thirteen years and I've seen many products -- both pharmaceutical and nutraceutical -- come down the pike. But none of them have been as exciting to me as noni juice. I've never seen one natural product be so beneficial to so many people. I can understand Dr. Tyler's and your interest in protecting people from exaggerated and rabid product claims. We all know that those claims are out there. But I think that if Dr. Tyler is going to write under the caption "The Honest Herbalist" he should give noni an honest appraisal. How many clinicians familiar with noni did he interview for the column? I'd be happy to share my clinical experience with him.

Noni juice is so beneficial to people under the stresses of modern life that you are doing people a huge disservice by discouraging them from trying it. In my opinion, I think noni is so incredible, you ought to consider doing a cover article on it. Ironically, Dr. Tyler also reviewed, in the same column, valerian and kava, two herbs I also use in my practice. Both of these herbs have very limited indications and received favorable write-ups from him. Yet, in my experience, they are only moderately effective in about 50% of the people I ask to try them. Noni helps many more conditions to a much higher degree of reliability. What is going on here? Is there some prejudice about how these three herbs are marketed? Is your top priority maintaining the health of people or the health of retail outlets? Do you have objections to a form of marketing that doesn't buy big ads in your publication? I would like to know your real motives for publishing this bit on noni, because I find this kind of deprecating and prejudiced journalism abhorrent. And it may even be damaging to the health of the public. Yet you, as a publication, profess to be about the opposite. Please explain this to me.

Thank you for your time in this matter. And I thank you in advance for the courtesy of your reply to my questions. I am also interested in Dr. Tyler's answers to my questions.

*Sincerely,*  
*Steven M. Hall, M.D.*

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