

Mr Geoffrey Sullivan  
Senior Coroner,  
The Old Courthouse,  
St Albans Road East,  
Hatfield,  
Hertfordshire,  
AL10 0ES.

16th August 2017.

Your reference: 3756.

Dear Mr Sullivan,

**Report into the death of Mrs Linda Jean Baranowski.**

I am writing in response to the request made under paragraph 7, schedule 5, of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and regulation 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 into the death of Mrs Linda Jean BARANOWSKI, dated the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017, and the conclusion that her death was likely caused as a result of an inflammatory response to the dietary supplements she was using in the period leading up to her death on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

The regulation 28 request was also sent the Head of Community Safety Directorate for Hertfordshire Trading Council.

This response outlines the specific work undertaken by the Incidents Team of the FSA in respect of Mrs Baranowski before and after her death, but also outlines the wider remit and strategic work the National Food Crime Unit is coordinating against unsafe and dangerous food for sale such as 2,4 Dinitrophenol.

**Food Standards Agency (FSA) Incidents Team response.**

The FSA Incidents Team was notified on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016 by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority (MHRA) and Hertfordshire Trading Standards (Herts TS) that Mrs Baranowski had been admitted to hospital. We were informed she was in a critical but stable



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condition in hospital and had been using slimming products which included T5 slimming pills, White tea, green tea, and a slimming gel. It was not known whether this list included all of the products that Mrs Baranawski had administered. At that time the hospital was not in a position to confirm what was causing the illness and, therefore, were not ruling out any product, but it was suggested that the slimming gel might be the cause. [Note: FSA is responsible for food products; cosmetic products or anything deemed to be medicinal would come under the responsibility of the MHRA]

Enquiries indicated that the products were purchased via the online selling site Ebay from a Hertfordshire retailer who had been supplied by other UK Ebay suppliers. The Hertfordshire retailer contacted all of her customers to instruct them to cease using the products immediately and this was overseen by Hertfordshire Constabulary and Herts TS department. Herts TS also contacted the Trading Standards departments where the UK suppliers were based.

On the 2nd February 2016 the FSA Incidents team conducted checks of their database for any records relating to the products, suppliers or Food Business Operators that had been notified as being involved in the production or supply of the T5 slimming pills. This revealed that one of the suppliers had been the subject of a previous incident due to the presence of ephedrine, which meant the products were regarded as medicinal and would be controlled under medicines legislation. The Medical Health Regulatory Authority (MHRA) had been informed of this latest case so we did not refer it to them for advice as we would have done otherwise. Herts TS sought to obtain samples of the product(s) for testing, either from the hospital or from the police (who had been handed some product from some of the other 39 consumers who purchased the product). The presence of the chemical 2,4 Dinitrophenol was unconfirmed and the Incidents team were content that the local Trading Standards (and police) had acted promptly and appropriately to reduce risk to others who had bought the package of products. This remained an apparent safety issue of undetermined causality and we had no further information on which to act.

On the 17th March 2016, having requested an update, the Incidents Team were informed by Herts TS that they consumer had died several weeks before and that Hertfordshire Constabulary were investigating the circumstances around the death. Herts TS were awaiting information on the cause of death but had analysed some of the same slimming tablets that had been supplied by the same retailer for 2,4 Dinitrophenol (DNP), a dangerous chemical that has been used as a slimming pill but is not intended for human ingestion. The FSA were advised that DNP had not been detected, and are awaiting the quantitative analysis of HCA. They also had some slimming gel analysed for DNP but this was not found to be present either. The Incidents team were informed that Herts TS had made some follow up enquiries and taken the products off EBay but noted some were still available elsewhere (e.g. Amazon).

On the 19th April 2016 FSA Incidents contacted Herts TS to seek an update on the cause of death and any further information (such as results for some further tablets that were being tested) and were informed that there was no further information available.

We have been notified by Herts TS of the following specific samples tested as part of their investigation:



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- T5 Garcinia Extreme Tablets (TS sample number 01625)
- Green and White Tea Bags TS sample numbers 01623 & 01624 (received from Herts police, original supplier no product left)
- Hot Yili Balo Body Slimming Gel (TS Sample number S56098)
- Balo Chilli gel (TS Sample number S56099) Chilli Gel (TS sample number S560100)

The samples were all sent to the Public Analyst to test for the presence of DNP (*It is a breach of general food law to sell this for human consumption*), the ingredients and labelling for compliance with the General Product Safety Regulations 2005, Cosmetic Product Enforcement Regulations 2013 and the Food Safety Act 1990.

Sample numbers 01623 and 01624 Green & White Teabags could not be analysed due to cross contamination and all being mixed up in the same bag.

Sample 01625 T5 Garcinia Extreme Fat Burner was compliant with regards to DNP- No DNP was detected. No other safety issues to be investigated by Trading Standards.

Sample Number S56098 Hot Yili Balo Body Slimming Gel - It is the Public Analyst opinion it was not a Cosmetic Product. There was no DNP detected.

Sample Number S56099 Hot Yili Balo Body Slimming Gel - It is the Public Analyst opinion it was not a Cosmetic Product. There was no DNP detected.

Sample Number S56100 Hot Yili Balo Body Slimming Gel - It is the Public Analyst opinion it was not a Cosmetic Product. There was no DNP detected.

### **NFCU Activity**

The NFCU continues to take steps to tackle the marketing and sale of 2,4 dinitrophenol (DNP). Owing to the dangers posed to the public tackling the illegal sale of DNP is one of the unit's highest priorities and will continue to be so. Whilst we have had some success in this area and there are encouraging signs that this is beginning to have a deterrent effect on both suppliers and potential users of the chemical there is still work to be done and we will continue to direct resource at this issue.

Figures on cases of DNP toxicity in the UK are compiled by the National Poisons Information Service (NPIS). The NPIS is the UK Department of Health approved, and Public Health England commissioned, national service that provides expert advice on all aspects of acute and chronic poisoning. In 2016, fourteen cases of DNP poisoning were reported, resulting in one fatality. This is in comparison to 2015 during which there were thirty-five cases reported with six fatalities. The NPIS data shows a steady decline in TOXBASE<sup>1</sup> access and telephone enquiries to the NPIS since the second quarter of 2015. The decline in reported cases and enquiries of NPIS corresponds with the NFCU targeted operation against the sale of DNP for human consumption. The NFCU is aware of only one UK death from DNP toxicity in 2016, and have been informed of a further death in February 2017 and inquiries continue into the circumstances of this fatality.

<sup>1</sup> The database by which health practitioners find information on toxins



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The NFCU has continued to promote the #dnpkills message on social media, most recently with the launch of pictorial e-cards warning the public of the dangers of DNP. Press releases have also been issued along with information on the FSA website.

Much of the market for DNP is via the internet which brings its own set of challenges, especially as most of the websites are neither hosted nor operated from within the UK. Nonetheless the NFCU is actively seeking out opportunities to make interventions including regular monitoring of the internet to identify those websites selling DNP.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

*electronically*

[Redacted name]

Head of Intelligence.

National Food Crime Unit

Food Standards Agency



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