



Letter to the editor: The Pundit Speaks
By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.
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"The Down Side of Antioxidants"

In 1999, confused scientist, Lester Packer, wrote *"The Antioxidant Miracle"* and stated categorically (but erroneously) that certain "pills" (antioxidants) could prevent cancer, extend your life span, improve your sex life and keep your skin supple and wrinkle free. Packer's name became so closely linked to the study of antioxidants that he was dubbed "Dr. Antioxidant" by some of his sycophantic colleagues. He said that antioxidants protect us from damage caused by free radicals, which can injure healthy cells and tissues. His biggest exaggeration was to say that free radicals were causal factors in nearly every known disease, from heart disease to arthritis to cancer to cataracts. He believed by controlling free radicals, antioxidants could make the difference between life and death and could help prevent and reverse nearly all diseases. But, later research would prove that his glowing predictions were off by a country mile. Packer was not alone in his hyped praise for antioxidants. In 1997, Dr. Kenneth Cooper wrote a book, *"Antioxidant Revolution."* In 1992, Carlson Wade wrote *"Eat Away Illness: How to Age-Proof Your Body With Antioxidant Foods."* And in 1998, Christopher Kilham wrote *"Opc: the Miracle Antioxidant."* But, the deception, misinformation and lies have continued right up to today as can be witnessed any day of the week on the Dr. Oz "Clinical Clown" Show. Also, in 2007, Daniel A. Kinderlehrer wrote *"The Antioxidant Save-Your-Life cookbook"* and in 2005, Dr. Kenneth Cooper was at it again with his book, *"Regaining The Power of Youth at Any Age: Startling New Evidence from the Doctor Who Brought us Aerobics, Controlling cholesterol and the Antioxidant Revolution."* Still, others are still trying to profit off of unsubstantiated antioxidant claims like the 2009 book of Keri Glassman, *"The O2 Diet: The Cutting Edge Antioxidant-Based Program That Will Make You Healthy, Thin, and Beautiful."* But truth has a way of coming to the surface. In 2010, the Harvard Science Review quoted one of my papers, "The Free Radical Fantasy" as a reference to set the record straight on antioxidants. Dr. Anghel's article was entitled, *"Antioxidants Not Heaven Sent"* and in 2011, Sharon Begley wrote in Newsweek an article entitled, *"Antioxidants Fall From Grace."* Begley wrote, "Now the research is challenging an even more fundamental tenet of the antioxidant craze. Many of the free radicals that are neutralized by antioxidants perform valuable functions in the body. The most important: fighting toxins (white blood cells churn out free radicals by the battalion to fight bacterial infection) and fighting cancer."

In the America that I love, there are increasing numbers of articles bringing forth the scientific truth about antioxidants. Hallelujah, brother! Choose wisely. Please check out my books at www.amazon.com or your local bookstore.

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