



REALITY COUNCIL APPLAUDS THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION SETTLEMENT WITH WEIGHT LOSS PILL MANUFACTURERS

NEW YORK (January 4, 2007) – The Reality Council, a group of experts on obesity, nutrition, diabetes and healthcare policy, today comments on the Federal Trade Commission’s (FTC) settlement with four leading weight loss pill manufacturers. The settlement requires the companies to change their advertising claims and pay a total of \$25 million for civil penalties and consumer redress.

The settlement comes less than three months after the Reality Council issued a White Paper, “Help Not Hype: *Getting Real About Weight Loss*,” that called on regulators to enforce existing laws and regulations that prohibit companies from making unsubstantiated weight loss claims.

The Reality Council applauds the efforts of the FTC, shining a national spotlight on the obesity epidemic and one of its underlying causes – the false hope that lasting weight loss can be achieved rapidly or by taking a “magic” pill. Obesity – America’s largest and potentially most expensive epidemic – hits home hard, impacting America’s health and economy.

“We see this as a wake up call to an indifferent industry that has for too long capitalized on consumers who are desperate to lose weight,” said Reality Council co-chair Louis J. Aronne, MD, FACP, of New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center. “The Reality Council aims to promote a realistic approach to weight loss and applauds the FTC’s action as a major step toward arming people with the real truth about weight loss.”

“Everyone needs to know that only gradual, modest weight loss and lifestyle changes can deliver successful and lasting weight management,” said George L. Blackburn, MD, PhD, of Harvard Medical School, who co-chairs the Reality Council with Dr. Aronne. “The Reality Council fully supports the FTC’s Red Flag Campaign and encourages healthcare providers, media and corporate America to adopt strategies to help promote a safe and realistic approach to weight loss.”

For more information or comment on this issue, please contact:

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About the Reality Council

At any given time, one-third of men and one-half of women in the U.S. are trying to lose weight, and they’re collectively spending billions of dollars each year to do so. But unfortunately, Americans are gaining weight, not losing it. To address this growing health problem, a group of esteemed experts on obesity, nutrition, diabetes and healthcare policy have formed the Reality Council. Members include co-chairs Dr. Louis J. Aronne and Dr. George L. Blackburn; MRC Greenwood, PhD, of University of California, Davis; Arthur Frank, MD, Obesity Specialist; Gary Foster, PhD, Behavioral Psychologist; Barbara Moore, PhD, Nutritionist; Judith Stern, ScD, Nutritionist; Nathaniel Clark, MD, MS, RD, Diabetes Specialist; Anne Wolf, MS, RD, Dietitian; Madelyn Fernstrom, PhD, CNS, Nutritionist; Susan Cummings, RD, Dietitian; Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH, Public Health Expert; Valentine Burroughs, MD, MBA, Diabetes Expert; Morgan Downey, JD, Obesity Specialist.

About Overweight and Obesity

Seven years ago, Healthy People 2010 (the report of a top-level Federal task force of health agencies) called for a one-third reduction in the proportion of adults who are obese from 15 percent to 23 percent. Instead, since 2000, the number of obese Americans has tripled.

Currently, approximately 65 percent of U.S. adults are overweight or obese, according to the National Institutes of Health. At any given time, about one-third of men and one-half of women in the United States are trying to lose weight. Unfortunately, they spend approximately \$46 billion per year on weight loss products and services.^{i,ii,iii,iv} Overweight and obesity are associated with an increased risk of developing health problems such as hypertension, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.^v Factors that can contribute to overweight include an abundance of high-calorie foods, low levels of physical activity, behavior, environment, and genetics.^{vi} Multiple studies have shown that a modest reduction in weight improves health outcomes significantly in overweight or obese patients.

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- i Serdula MK, Mokdad AH, Williamson DF et al. Prevalence of attempting weight loss and strategies for controlling weight. *JAMA*. 1991;282:1353-8.
- ii Bish CL, Blanck HM, Serdula MK et al. Diet and physical activity behaviors among Americans trying to lose weight: 2000 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. *Obes Res*. 2005;13:596:607.
- iii Wiess EC, Galuska DA, Khan LK et al. Weight-control practices among U.S. adults, 2001-2002. *Am J Prev Med*. 2006;31:18-24.
- iv U.S. weight loss market reaches \$46 billion: sales of meal replacements & OTC diet pills plunge, as bariatric surgeries and low-carb product sales soar [press release]. Tampa, FL: Marketdata Enterprises; March 1, 2005. Available at: <http://www.mkt-data-ent.com/pressreleases/DietMarch2005.doc>. Accessed September 17, 2006.
- v Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Overweight and Obesity." <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/> Accessed 12/22/05.
- vi Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Overweight and Obesity: Contributing Factors." http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/contributing_factors.htm. Accessed 12/22/05.