

## Will A-Rod's Titanium Necklace Get Him into the Hall of Fame?

By Alan Herman, Ph.D.

*The official Major League Baseball (MLB) Tornado necklace worn on the field (by major league athletes) featuring exclusive Aqua-Titanium™ technology helps to promote stable energy flow throughout the body. The benefits of this are longer lasting energy, less fatigue, shortened recovery time and more relaxed muscles. The MLB Authentic Collection is unique and MLB allows its players to wear the MLB authentic products on the field (Phiten USA, 2010).*

*“This is utter nonsense,” said Steve Nissen, head of cardiology at the Cleveland Clinic. “There’s absolutely no scientific reason why this would work. Unfortunately, we’ve not done a good job as a society in keeping people from selling snake oil. If you come in to see me as a patient and tell me that you have a terrible headache, and I give you a placebo sugar pill and tell you that it’s going to relieve your headache, there’s a 35 to 40 percent chance that it will relieve your headache,” Nissen said in a telephone interview. “That’s*

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***called the placebo effect. It's very powerful, and that's what allows quackery to exist"*** (Levinson and Randall, 2010).

Wearing exotic substances to improve health is nothing new; magnets for therapy have been worn for centuries according to the U.S. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Bethesda, Maryland. Studies of magnetic jewelry have not shown demonstrable effects on pain, nerve function, cell growth or blood flow (Levinson and Randall, 2010). A study of 14 soccer and hockey players wearing titanium-treated clothes showed they did not play significantly better (Wadsworth, Walmsley, Rowlands & Wadsworth, 2010).

Still Little Leaguers to pros such as LeBron James, David Beckham, and Alex Rodriguez all wear such products. Their sales have tripled in the U.S. since 2008, according to the research group SportsOneSource. Phiten Co. said its worldwide sales topped \$200 million last year. Power Balance is another profitable manufacturer. The jewelry makers say

their products use processed titanium and holograms to improve balance, energy, recovery time and flexibility (Levinson and Randall, 2010).

The claims are that the light and strong mineral titanium combines with another mineral germanium to attract and pullout harmful charges from the body. These charges accumulate from frequent exposure to electronic products, cell phones, ultraviolet rays and chemicals. They claim titanium and germanium with their strong ionization balance the body's energy field and improve its efficiency. They claim the result is improved metabolism and reduction of muscle pain and stiffness (Gone For A Run, 2010). Unfortunately all of this is not scientifically proven.

EFX a manufacturer, claims that its Holographic technology in sportswear contains algorithms and frequencies that interact positively with the body's energy field. When placed near the body, especially at key energy centers such as the hands and feet, its products will harmonize with the body's

naturally occurring bioelectric frequencies immediately unleashing the body's full potential for function and performance (EFX, 2010). However, President Jim Ruschman says his company has not conducted any clinical studies: "We look forward to and embrace testing with anyone." (Levinson and Randall, 2010).

**Erica Jefferson, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), said none of the bracelets have been approved for medical use, and any claims to reduce symptoms or treat a condition must be backed by scientific evidence and reviewed by impartial scientists (Levinson and Randall, 2010). Dr. John Green, an associate professor of orthopedic surgery and sports medicine says: "*I know of absolutely no scientific evidence to implicate titanium to improving performance. If you can get a couple of people to think it works then you can sell it. Testimonials aren't exactly science.*" Green, a college football team physician, said he knows of no college players who wear the necklaces. "*If they can sell it without science, why bother, it's very expensive to go through FDA approval.*" (Harris, 2008).**

Finally, John Murray, a sports psychologist in Palm Beach, Florida, who has worked with professional athletes, said he would not necessarily advise his clients against wearing the jewelry: "There's an

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old quote, ‘Don’t turn good faith into bad faith...’ (Levinson and Randall, 2010). In other words, he is not going to douse the placebo effect if it is working.

If you can convince someone that placing a rubber band around his neck will increase performance and reduce fatigue because the rubber band’s absorbed kinetic energy passes through the skin into the muscle fibers it undoubtedly will work for some of the people. The benefit of the rubber band theory is that it costs only a few cents as compared to titanium necklaces, bracelets and clothing sold for up to \$230.

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# Who Provides Free Medical Advice 24 Hours A Day?

*By Alan Herman, Ph.D.*

Many people are not aware that pharmacists are able to do more than just fill prescriptions. The United States Department of Labor states that in addition to dispensing prescription drugs and devices, a pharmacist can advise customers on drug interactions and side effects as well as monitor customers' health and progress to ensure that they are using their medications safely and effectively. Pharmacists advise doctors about prescription drugs. **Pharmacists advise consumers about over-the-counter medications.** Pharmacists can advise customers about general health topics such as: diet, exercise, stress management and provide information on medical equipment and home healthcare supplies (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010).

Some pharmacists provide specialized services to patients with conditions such as diabetes, asthma, smoking cessation or high blood pressure. Some

pharmacists are trained to administer vaccinations-- such as flu vaccine. **Pharmacists can host classes on chronic diseases such as: diabetes, heart disease and obesity.** Consumers attending these classes learn how to manage a disease with drugs, diet and exercise. The class may include instruction on how to monitor cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure. Some health plans are paying pharmacists to monitor customers' compliance with medications (Abelson and Singer, 2010).

Pharmacists can offer surrogate primary care when conventional or complementary care is too expensive or inaccessible. They can assist consumers in determining whether their symptoms: (1) require urgent medical care; (2) can wait until a visit to a health care professional; or (3) medical care is not needed. They can also identify a location for treatment, and even means to finance

health care and prescriptions. Pharmacists are reliable sources of health care advice for the millions of uninsured people and insured people with unaffordable premiums and co-payments. **Speaking to a pharmacist and asking his advice is free and sometimes available 24-hours a day.**

A pharmacist has comparable expertise to a medical doctor in regard to medications. With additional training they may receive a doctor of pharmacy degree (Education-Portal.com, 2010). **Keep in mind the price consumers pay for a prescription or even an over-the-counter drug includes the advice of the pharmacist.** Pharmacists are responsible for monitoring consumers' safe use of medications and ensuring that when taking multiple medications consumers do not have serious interaction risks. Whether you are insured or uninsured the pharmacist is a key health professional responsible for your health care.

Professor Alan Herman is an adjunct professor in the Health Education Department at BMCC/CUNY.

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# Prescriptions To Death

By Fallon Garner

**In 2004, non-medical use of prescription drugs ranked second only to marijuana as the most prevalent category of drug abuse in America.** What is unknown to many are the risks of recreational prescription drug use. High use is reported among students who believe that these drugs are much safer because they are prescription drugs. These misconceptions regarding prescription drugs contribute to the ever growing rate of America's runaway prescription drug abuse.

It can be surprisingly easy to acquire prescription drugs. For some, all it takes is a look through the family medicine cabinet. This is where most students acquire them and then go off to trade it with friends who also raided their families' medicine chests. This search for drugs is known as '**pharming**'. The collection of random pills in a bowl or a baggie is called '**trail mix**' and students will gather with each other to take the pills at '**pharm**' par-

ties. Students at these parties will take drugs without knowing exactly what they are, where they came from and how they will interact with not only their body, but with the other drugs in their system. There are increased reports of young adults overdosing on bizarre and even lethal combinations of pills. Of the drug-related emergency room admissions in 2004, one-fourth or 325,000 were from overdoses of prescription and/or over-the-counter drugs. Nineteen percent, or about 4.5 million teenagers claimed use of a prescription drugs such as Oxy-Cotin or Ritalin as reported in a 2005 survey by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America.

Ritalin use among college students is popular. It is not hard for someone to fall into the so-called promise that using it will make you smarter, especially when there is an upcoming test or paper due. In fact there is no drug that will boost brain power. Ritalin is a stimulant and may keep you awake and

alert. However unlike coffee, Ritalin carries a considerable risk for side effects and addiction. The reward of getting a good grade because Ritalin kept you awake to finish a paper can make way for Ritalin to be used for your next paper or test. This is an easy and common path to addiction.

Teens are not just getting their drugs from the medicine cabinet, they are going out and finding ways to get it from outside the home. Sources can be their friends, the internet or even false or duplicate prescriptions from doctors. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has put extra effort into stopping drugs from being used illegally. One focus is on Oxy-Cotin®. Oxycodone is used to relieve moderate to severe pain and is in a class of narcotic drugs called opiate analgesics. It works by changing the way the brain and nervous system respond to pain. The DEA has plans to monitor high volume purchases to identify fraud and abuse.

The DEA along with local governments is exploring other

ways to combat the use of prescription drug abuse. States are exploring ways for citizens to turn in their old prescriptions promptly in drug take-back programs. What is truly needed is for parents to become more aware of the risk of keeping unused prescriptions in their medicine chest or accessible to their children and their children's friends. Also there needs to be a greater effort in informing young people of the health risks of recreational prescription drug use. And another essential service that can be included in Professor Herman's article in this issue (Who Provides Free Medical Advice 24 Hours A Day?) is that pharmacists can monitor prescription drug use in the home.

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