

Using Evidence to Build the Ingredient Story

by Latesha Richards

Condition-specific ingredients have reached a new level of influence in the natural products space. The marketing of condition-specific proprietary ingredients—witness promotion of ingredients, including Corowise™, CardioAid™ and Pycogenol®, among others, for heart health—have set the tone for what will be the trend in distinguishing a generic offering from a superior brand. Brand marketers must wonder what has made these particular ingredients in this category successfully marketed to target consumers. What is influencing their behavior? The answer is not in the marketing of the ingredient, but in the scientific/clinical evidence that backs ingredient claims and quality. Evidence is essentially the force that drives the awareness,

learning and motivation to buy the product and spread the word about it.

Like an individual running for an esteemed political office on meaningful qualifications, a company looking to gain market share must build the story for its branded ingredient. The story uses qualifications or evidence to show what makes the ingredient so great (the unique ingredient profile) and why it is the best candidate for the job it proposes to do (efficacy). To a voter, qualifications may make or break a candidate. Similarly, clinical evidence will make or break a branded ingredient. Any company looking to gain marketplace advantage must build the (evidence) story, and ultimately master the art of telling (marketing) the story. There are two pertinent aspects of evidence an ingredient story can't do without.

The story shows a continuum of research and development from infancy to maturity and beyond. Establishing a story comes from dedicating years of laborious development and building solid, meaningful evidence. It comes from knowing scientific evidence builds trust and credibility needed to maintain brand loyalty. It comes from knowing consistent investment in research and development makes ingredient manufacturers look extremely attractive. For one, consumers highly respect companies that show dedication to science and research; second, consumers are more willing to purchase from a company they know and trust for having done research. Building a continuum of evidence is the key to gaining competitive edge.

Companies that have not only developed formulations based on known scientifically backed ingredients, but have continuously performed clinical studies show complete commitment to improving the efficacy of their ingredients. They understand ingredient brands continuously backed by scientific and clinical evidence are likely to gain and sustain consumer trust and confidence. In addition, engaging in ongoing clinical research makes innovation and new explorations possible, such as new combination products, line extensions or co-branding partnerships. With evidence, there's no limit as to how far a company can go. Companies that invest time, effort and dollars into development and clinical research programs will be positioning themselves above the pack, right from the start.

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The screenshot shows the Natural Products Insider website interface. Several callout boxes with arrows point to specific features:

- 'Business Issues' and 'Health Conditions' sections:** Points to the top navigation menu.
- Daily news:** Points to the 'NEWS & ARTICLES' section.
- Searchable news and articles:** Points to the search bar at the top right.
- New ingredient information:** Points to the 'NEW INGREDIENTS' section.
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The website content includes sections for 'NEWS & ARTICLES', 'TODAY'S FEATURE', 'NEW INGREDIENTS', 'BLOGS', 'E-BOOKS', 'WEBINARS', 'SUPPLIERS', and 'ANNOUNCEMENTS'. A featured article for 'Oligonol' is prominently displayed.

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Furthermore, meaningful data obtained from conducting proprietary research on innovative ingredient products will set an ingredient apart from its competition and gain competitive edge. Unlike many companies that “borrow” existing data to satisfy minimum substantiation requirements, companies that have engaged in sponsored research understand the need for meaningful evidence. Pursuing meaningful evidence comes from understanding that existing published data only builds part of the ingredient story. Existing data only provides the basis for a hypothesis about efficacy that must be further tested. The significant part of the story comes from meaningful evidence that shows the ingredient formulation itself is safe and the specific chemicals used in combination have proven to work synergistically and effectively for its purported benefits.

Engaging in proprietary research comes from understanding if the ingredient is a proprietary blend, the mixture may have resulted in ingredient interactions and chemical alterations or, in the case of an extraction procedure, the ingredient profile can be altered, which can potentially increase or decrease bioavailability and, thus, affect overall efficacy. With proprietary research, data will show the benefits of an enhanced form is superior to the standard form. Evidence can potentially demonstrate, through a number of in vitro experiments, the physiological mechanism by which the ingredient works and what may be happening at the cellular level. Conducting proprietary studies comes from understanding there may be profound differences between two formulations, even when both are similar in chemical composition, which can yield different pharmacological properties and physiological outcomes.


Ingredient manufacturers that do proprietary work are committed to show their proprietary ingredient works effectively for its intended purpose. They will rely on a combination of existing published data, in vitro and in vivo models to establish the complete story of what makes their ingredient product so beneficial for its consumers. With proprietary data to support efficacy comes a great product.

Condition-specific branded ingredients are, in themselves, uniquely positioned in the market. These ingredients provide sustained health and functioning of a specific area of the body. Because they meet a specific need, condition-specific ingredients have an intrinsic advantage among consumers with these specific conditions. Makers of these ingredients have capitalized on a


particular health condition segment; they have equally won over consumers with a powerful story that creates value in the mind of the consumer. Common among the makers of condition-specific ingredients is high regard for scientific/clinical research and proactive thinking to ensure each chemical component in the final ingredient is backed by solid evidence.


If your ingredient story has not yet been established, or is missing a crucial part, now is the time to partner with a scientific/clinical research organization to build a scientific dossier. Taking the time to ensure your story includes all of these key points will increase the chances of your marketing efforts soaring and that ingredient gaining that ultimate competitive edge. Remember, the proof is in the story! □


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