

Post-marketing Surveillance of Cordyceps Products in Thailand

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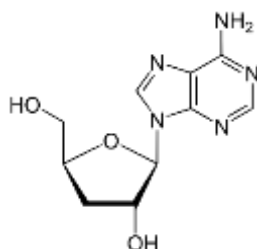
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Cordyceps sinensis



Cordyceps militaris



cordycepin

<https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/cordyceps-militaris-traditional-chinese-herbs-vector-36357713>
<https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/cordyceps-ophiocordyceps-medicinal-mushroom-vector-19204682>

Cordyceps-based dietary supplements have become widely popular in Thailand since 2020. Despite legal restrictions prohibiting health claims, many of these products have been marketed with exaggerated benefits — such as improving kidney function, preventing cancer, and lowering blood sugar — especially on TV and social media. This has misled consumers, some of whom later developed acute kidney injuries.

Cordyceps in the market

- ***Cordyceps sinensis***: DongChongXiaCao (冬蟲夏草 Dōng Chóng Xià Cǎo) or winter worm-summer grass
- ***Cordyceps militaris***: This species can be cultivated, is considered safe, and is more affordable. It contains a high amount of a key compound called **cordycepin**. While cordycepin offers several health benefits—such as anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties—**consuming it in high amounts may lead to kidney failure, similar to the effects of certain anti-inflammatory drugs.**

The research team analyzed 65 Cordyceps-containing products sold in Thailand in 2023.

Key findings include:

- **53.8%** contained **cordycepin**, a bioactive compound known for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.
- **53.8%** included ***Cordyceps militaris***, a cultivated species that is cheaper, arsenic-free, and high in cordycepin.
- However, **54.3%** of products were mislabeled, stating incorrect species or lacking species information altogether.
- **11 products** had **no Cordyceps content** at all.
- **21.5%** had **incomplete labeling**, missing mandatory warnings like “This product is not intended to treat or prevent disease.”
- **11%** were either unregistered, used fake registration numbers, or used numbers that had been canceled.
- **6.2%** of legally registered products were adulterated with **steroids**, posing serious health risks.
- **72.3%** advertised online without proper authorization and made illegal therapeutic claims.

Common misleading claims included:

- Blood sugar reduction (11%)
- Immune boosting (11%)
- Lowering cholesterol (8%)
- Sexual enhancement (8%)
- Kidney rejuvenation (7%)

Implications:

This study reveals major gaps in the regulation and enforcement of dietary supplement laws in Thailand. It urges consumers to:

- **Use only registered products**
- **Avoid being misled by exaggerated claims**
- **Consult healthcare professionals before use**

The findings also emphasize the need for the **Thai FDA** to strengthen **post-market surveillance** and ensure that products sold are safe, correctly labeled, and legally marketed.