Why are so many mummy influencers peddling slimming pills and consumables from China?

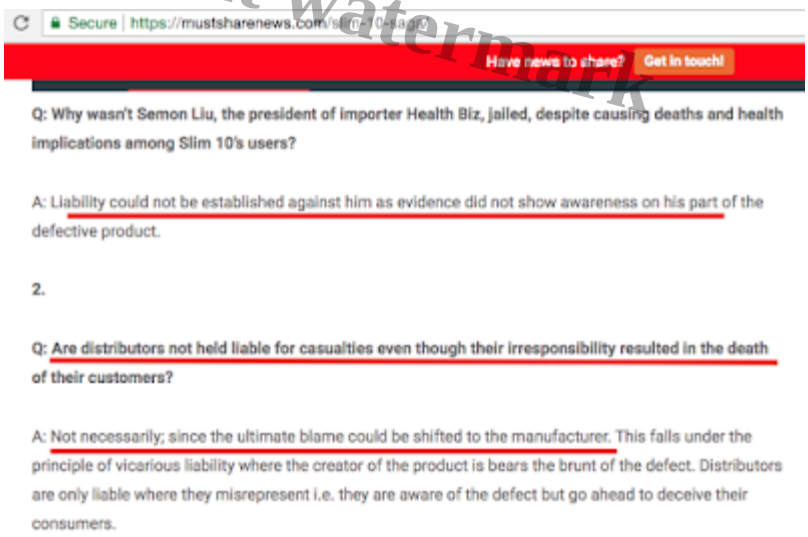
Description

Does anyone still remember Slim10?

The notorious dieting pill, produced by a manufacturer in China, led to various cases of thyroid problems, liver failure and even deaths throughout Asia among people who had consumed it. 2 harmful substances (fenfluramine and nicotinamide) were later detected, as well as traces of 2 other banned substances (thyroxine and triiodothyronine); all of which were not listed in the ingredients list submitted to HSA.

Now, I want you to take a close look at what happened to the distributors who were responsible for selling the pills:

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Screenshot from MustShareNews

Now, you would think Singaporeans would have learnt to be more careful of diet pills by now, much less the ones that are sold online instead of through a reputable healthcare or medical store, but apparently thatâ??s not the case.

With the rise of lifestyle influencers marketing slimming pills and consumables on their Instagram, I canâ??t help but wonder whether these products are TRULY safe, and whatâ??s to happen should anyone end up being harmed by them. After all, we now know that distributor liability cannot be really established in Singapore after the Slim10 case, so it is more crucial that consumers be aware and informed of what theyâ??re really getting into.

I was going to stay out of this, but it has been MONTHS since the issue was first raised to me by a concerned reader, and still no one has done any expose or a further investigation into the safety

concerns of the slimming products that are increasingly marketed on Instagram.

The marketing tactics that are employed to sell this products are also similar â?? youâ??ll find it on the influencersâ?? Instagram Stories, where it disappears after 24 hours (unless they pin it as their profile highlights)â?¦therefore leaving no trace or evidence that they ever promoted or sold it.

The problem also lies in HOW these slimming products are being promoted and sold by none other than mummy influencers themselves, who generally tend to enjoy higher trust among their followers who believe that they will not recommend or consume anything that could harm themselves or their babies. These influencers are pushing out claims that the products are absolutely **safe for pregnant women and breastfeeding mums, even when there is hardly any concrete evidence to prove so.**

I can understand wanting to share something that worked for them (or didnâ??t cause any problems for them), but one should be careful from stating it is safe for vulnerable groups when there are no prior tests conducted for that. **The best person to tell a pregnant or breastfeeding mother if a product is safe for consumption, is their doctor.**

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Thankfully no lives have been lost, and no foetuses / babies have been harmed so far from the mothers who consumed these slimming products (or at least, none whom I know of), but could it be because it is still too early to tell?

I took a deeper look into these products that the influencers are selling and hereâ??s my take on it:

Tremella DX+

1. So, did HSA approve this product or not?

@charlottekiew states that the product is HSA-approved, going so far as to show a screenshot of the HSA document as evidence to back up her claims.





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But, letâ??s see what was covered up behind her editsâ?¦



Health Sciences Authority
11 Biopolis Way #11-03 Helios
Singapore 138667
Tel: 65 6866 3400 Fax: 65 6478 9027
Website: www.hsa.gov.sg

HSA

HSA-1509-02042

screenshot on
@sgbudgetbabe

16 October 2015

DID: 65 68663577
FAX: 65 64789037

NATURAL HERBS GALLERIA
Attn: Mr. Keith Khor

Dear Mr. Khor,

TREMELLA-DX

Please refer to your enquiry on the above product.

2 From the information supplied, please be advised that the product presently does not need to be registered and can be imported and sold without a license from this Authority provided the requirements stated in Annex 1 are complied with.

3 As the above product can affect the health of consumers, the onus of responsibility for the safety and quality of this product and compliance with the Guidelines for Health Supplements rests with you as the importer/manufacturer/seller/dealer. Moreover, it is imperative that you also possess adequate knowledge on the product dealt by your company.

4 More information on health supplements, including the above guidelines, can be found at:
http://www.hsa.gov.sg/publish/hsaportal/en/health_products_regulation/complementary_medicines/supplements.html .

5 Please note that this letter is not to be construed as an endorsement/approval of the product **TREMELLA-DX** nor of any claim made for it and is not to be used in the advertisement/sales promotion of the product.

6 This advice is given without prejudice to any future legislative and administrative change on the control of the product **TREMELLA-DX**. It may not be applicable or may be superseded as and when new information on the product is subsequently obtained.

Yours sincerely,

DR. RIA BISWAS (MS)
Regulatory Specialist
Complementary Health Products Branch
Health Products Regulation Group

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â??This letter is not to be construed as an endorsement / approval of the product TREMELLA-DXâ?•. Yes, now we can see the full statement behind what was covered by the huge â??DM to order!â?•.

At least one reader of hers believed Charlotteâ??s claims that it was indeed HSA-approved and thus absolutely safe for consumption and sale in Singapore, but eventually found out it was false (and provided me with the screenshots above and below for the purpose of this piece to warn people).



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Edit: Charlotte Kiew wishes to clarify that she actually posted both the version with the HSA-approved edit and the full one without on her IG stories (although no one could provide evidence that she did post the full one as well, and she herself was unable to provide such proof when I asked her for it to support her claim), and took it down after she was alerted that it isnâ??t HSA-approved after all. What I donâ??t understand, however, is that did she NOT read the full letter then, and that was it purely a coincidence that her edits seemed to deliberately cover up the part that says it isnâ??t a HSA approval? My full version of the HSA statement was provided to me by the reader above, and not from Charlotte herself.

Charlotte also demanded that I write to include how she says HSA is not in charge of approving such products in the first place (which is nothing new, and Iâ??ve mentioned it previously during the Beautiful Teeth Whitening Kit expose before as well).

2. Contradictory statements on whether this product is safe for pregnant mothers

One seller specifically highlights that the product is prohibited for consumption by pregnant women, whereas @charlottekiew and @vannytelly believe and claim that it is safe for expecting and nursing mums.

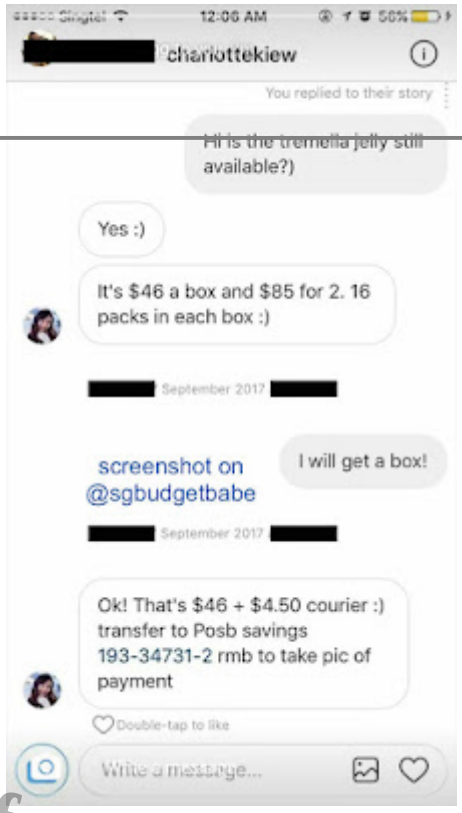
Compare these contradicting claims and decide for yourself:



Edit: Charlotte has clarified that she was only reproducing the info that was given to her. and that she
Stories to rebut a readerâ??s message
s when questioned.







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In case youâ??re wondering, the ingredients listed are: water, mixed berry powder (strawberry, cranberry, raspberry, blueberry, blackberry), tremella powder (a white fungus), wheatgrass, pumpkin fruit powder, dandelion, green tea, xanthan gum.

I quote the below excerpt from Diet Pills Watchdog, which has done a fabulous write-up on this:

Tremella DX+ claims to offer 30 benefits in one, when in reality it struggles to offer customers a single benefit that we could find. Any claims that this oral yoghurt can bleach or lighten skin is preposterous, and had us checking and re-checking the advertising materials to see whether we had misread. ***There is also virtually nothing in this product that can help customers lose weight.****What makes this version different from the original Tremella DX is the use of glutathione, which is used throughout the body in many healthy functions. Unfortunately, the form that this antioxidant has been presented in is not easily absorbed by the body, making this another strange and pointless inclusion in the formula.Tremella DX+ is available to buy for relatively low prices on convenient Malaysian online stores.* ***The lowest price we found for a standard 16-sachet pack was 76 Malaysian Ringgitt (RM) â?? this is around US$17.50.*** *Although Tremella DX+ is claimed to be Japanese in origin, our research implies that the product is made in Malaysia by and for the Chinese market. The productâ??s unclear ownership means that it is sold mainly by independent distributors, many of whom have probably been scammed themselves into buying useless stock.* ***We do not recommend Tremella DX+*** *to our readers.*

4. Does it make sense that the HSA letter was issued in 2015 when the distributor was only incorporated as a company in 2016?

My guess is that the HSA letter was for Tremella DX, but what the influencers were selling was Tremella DX+ which is an â??improvedâ?• version of it.

The Company profile report for TREMELLA GLOBAL SDN. BHD. (1205357-P) can be purchased at RAM Credit Information Sdn Bhd

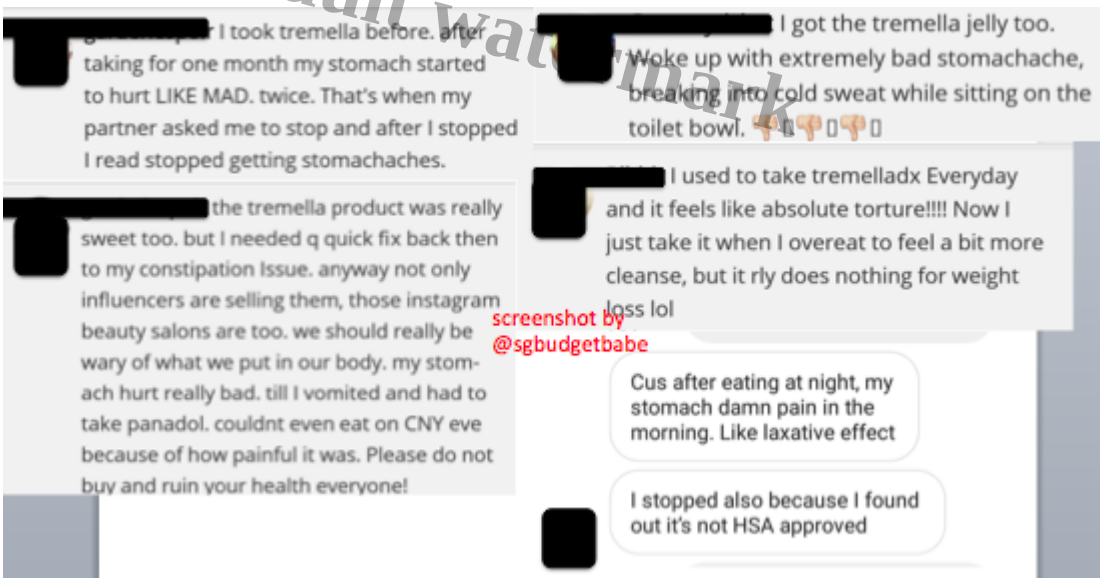
Company Name	TREMELLA GLOBAL SDN. BHD.
Company Registration No.	1205357-P
Year of Incorporate	2016
State	SELANGOR

screenshot on @sgbudgetbabe

Source

5. Many consumers have complained about severe tummy pains after having eaten Tremella DX+.

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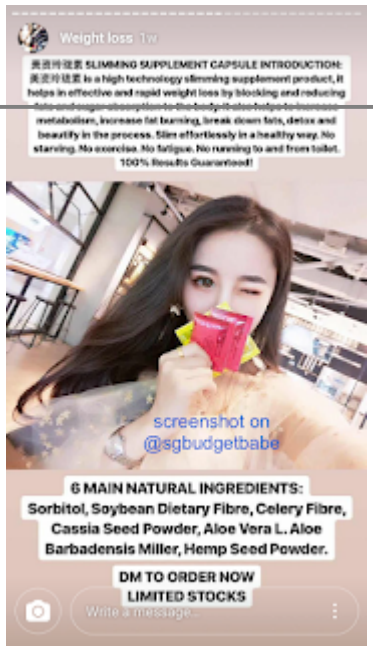


However, please note that any kind of food or even health supplements work differently for everyone so this is not an indication that if you were to take Tremella DX+, youâ??ll encounter the same effects. Nonetheless, you might just want to take note lest you experience the same symptoms.

Meizi slimming pills aka ç¾?èµ?ç?²ç•?ç´ (or ç¾?è³?ç?²ç?•ç´)

This has recently been promoted and sold by influencers @charlottekiew , @shanelkiehls and @kimora.x who have a combined total follower count of nearly 100,000, where all three had encouraged their followers to DM them to order.





Screenshots taken from @kimora.x Instagram highlights

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1. Look at it being





A previous screenshot featured a photo which Shanel had posted on her Instagram of her daughter with the Meizi pills. However, Shanel has reached out to ask (or might I say, DEMAND) that I replace it

with the above photo for the ziplock image instead. I agreed to do so although she was incredibly rude and even resorted to insulting me while making her ~~request~~ demand.

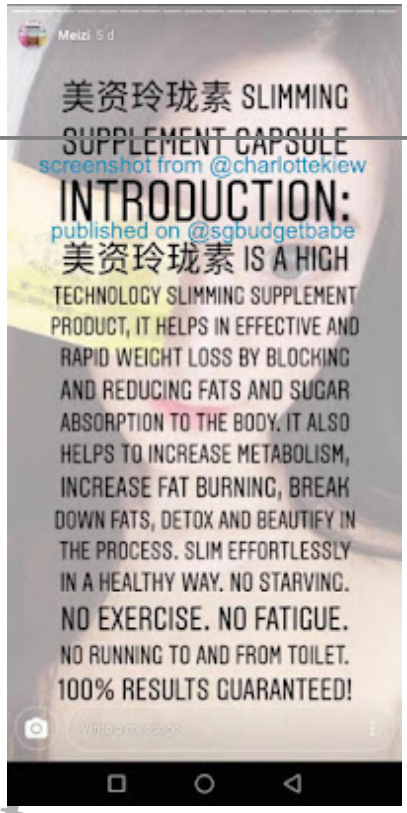
2. Is it really safe? What are the ingredients in the pills?

Aside from claims that it is made from purely vegetarian and herbal ingredients, I was only able to find the purported main ingredients (but that doesnâ??t tell us anything about whether there could be any other ingredients or traces of harmful substances in it): hemp seed flour, fructose, aloe vera gel freeze-dried powder, sorbitol, soybean dietary fibre, cassia seed powder, celery fibre.

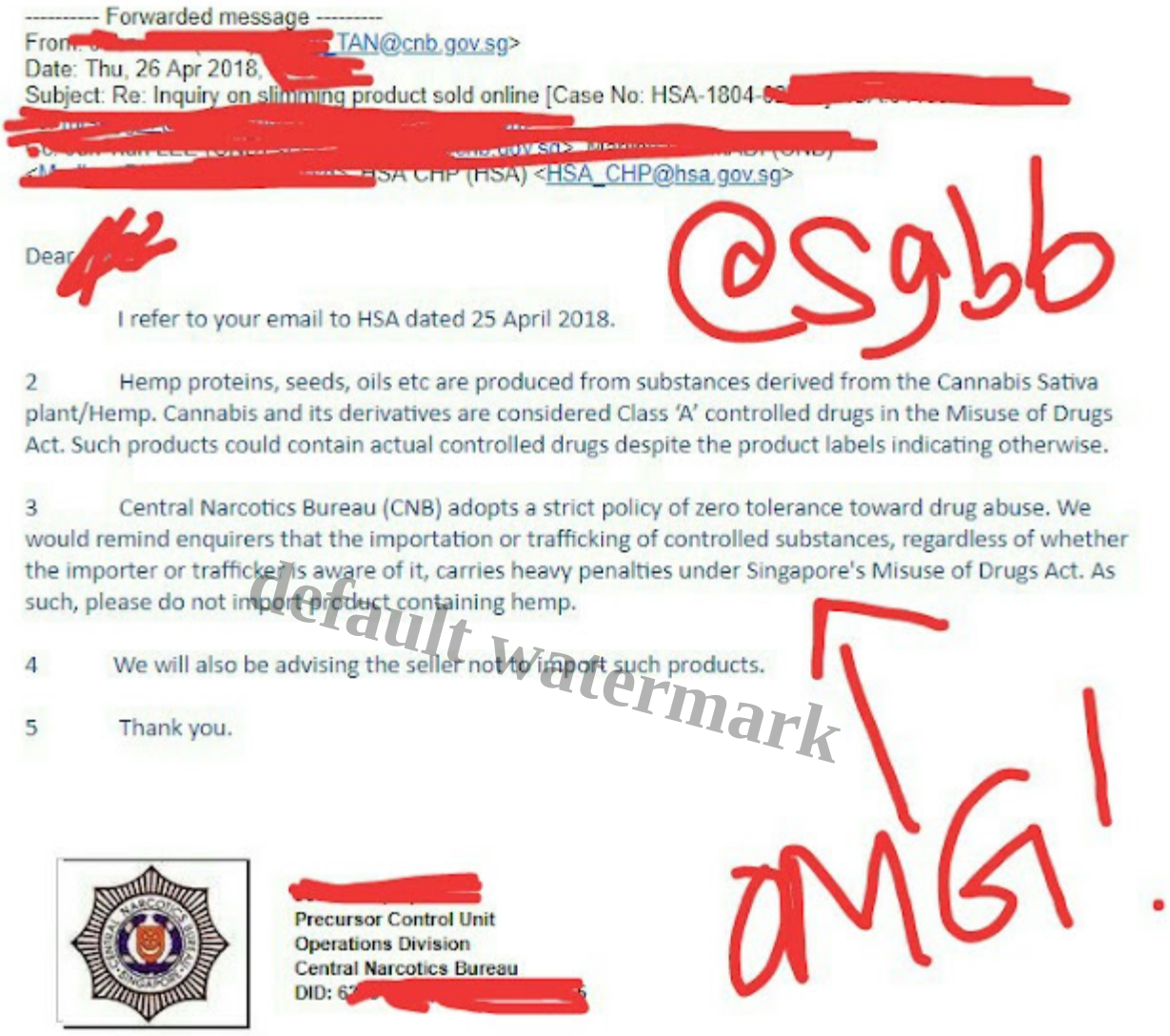


@charlottekiew has since removed all traces of her selling Meizi on her Instagram





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---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: [redacted]TAN@cnb.gov.sg>
Date: Thu, 26 Apr 2018, [redacted]
Subject: Re: Inquiry on slimming product sold online [Case No: HSA-1804-[redacted]
[redacted] HSA CHP (HSA) <HSA_CHP@hsa.gov.sg>

Dear [redacted]

I refer to your email to HSA dated 25 April 2018.

2 Hemp proteins, seeds, oils etc are produced from substances derived from the Cannabis Sativa plant/Hemp. Cannabis and its derivatives are considered Class 'A' controlled drugs in the Misuse of Drugs Act. Such products could contain actual controlled drugs despite the product labels indicating otherwise.

3 Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) adopts a strict policy of zero tolerance toward drug abuse. We would remind enquirers that the importation or trafficking of controlled substances, regardless of whether the importer or trafficker is aware of it, carries heavy penalties under Singapore's Misuse of Drugs Act. As such, please do not import product containing hemp.

4 We will also be advising the seller not to import such products.

5 Thank you.

[redacted]
Precursor Control Unit
Operations Division
Central Narcotics Bureau
DID: 6[redacted]

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@sgbb

OMG!

The above email screenshot is a part of an email thread on Meizi Ling Long Su pills that was brought to HSAâ??s attention. We did not expect CNB to get involved, and Iâ??m not quite sure if this means hemp products would all be classified as such.

Edit: The image is not to be misconstrued or taken as an indication in any way that the three influencers involved were selling drugs, as I still cannot be sure what the slimming pill is classified as.

3. So, did HSA approve this product or not?

Another reader and I was unable to find any mentions of the product on HSAâ??s website while trying to find out if the medicine was even registered for sale, so that HSA can easily take action if there are complaints regarding the pill. We were not able to find any. *If you do, please let me know!*



WoWo Collagen Jelly

Most of you should be well aware of the entire controversy surrounding WoWo products by now, but aside from the **numerous** WoWo distributors, there are 2 well-known mummy bloggers and influencers) and @bongqiuqiu

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Many of the influencers promoting this only mentioned that it is made from bird nest and collagen, but a further search led me to this full list shared by a seller on Shopee:

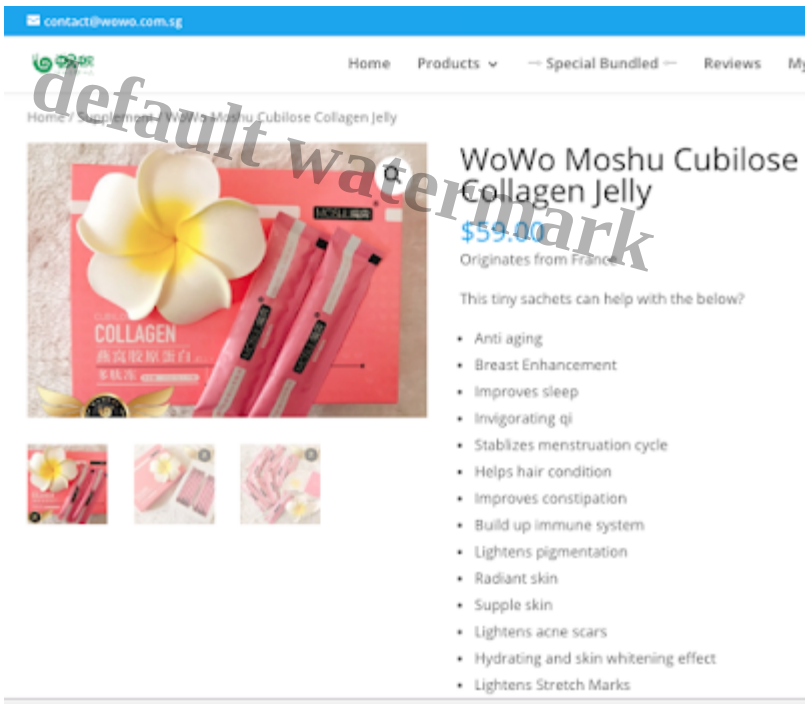
A5 premium grade Indo birdâ??s nest, collagen peptides, collagen powder, soya peptide powder, wolf berries, lily bulbs, deep sea collagen extracts, gelatinum asini.

I donâ??t really see how any of the above ingredients would have led to such a bright pink colour in the jelly, leading me to believe that either (i) some sort of chemical reaction occurred to produce this hue or (ii) there are more unnamed ingredients that we donâ??t know of, and who knows if they are harmful?

2. Miraculous marketing claims!!! This product cures all!

If you even believe their claims that eating this collagen jelly will help you to make your breasts bigger, stabilise your menstruation cycle, improve constipation, build up your immune system, lightens pigmentation and acne scars, etcâ?¦

Yes, theyâ??re claiming this ONE product can do that much. Lol.



Source

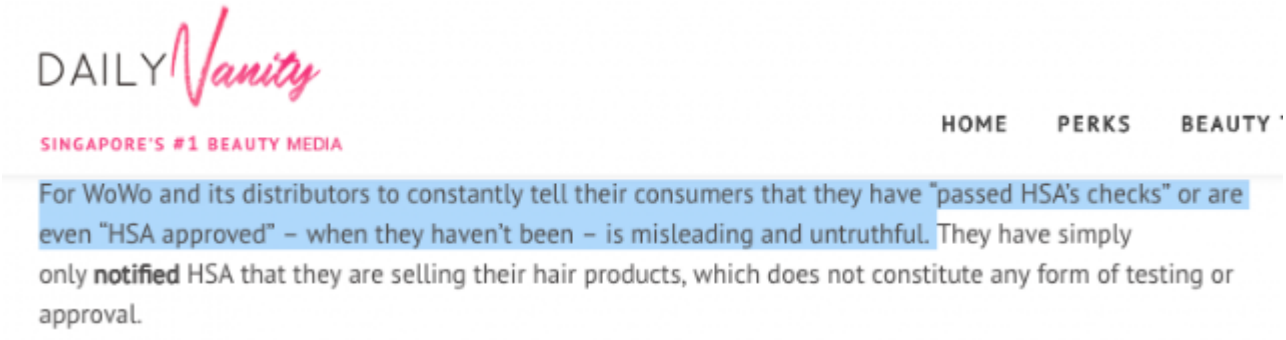




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I donâ??t know about you, but I donâ??t see how the ingredients can actually achieve such miraculous effects. I donâ??t believe it one bit.

3. Misleading claims by several WoWo sellers online that they are â??HSA approvedâ?•.


DAILY Vanity
SINGAPORE'S #1 BEAUTY MEDIA
HOME PERKS BEAUTY

For WoWo and its distributors to constantly tell their consumers that they have "passed HSA's checks" or are even "HSA approved" – when they haven't been – is misleading and untruthful. They have simply only **notified** HSA that they are selling their hair products, which does not constitute any form of testing or approval.

Please read this brilliant investigation by Daily Vanity here where they state that theyâ??ve successfully managed to get a statement from HSA proving the claims of â??HSA approvedâ?• and â??passing HSA checksâ?• essentially never happened. *(sidenote: I emailed HSA with similar screenshots and concerns on 17 April leh why HSA never reply me?!? -.-)*

Bong Qiu Qiu also said previously on her IG Live that they are not HSA approved because thereâ??s no such thing, and that she wouldnâ??t personally recommend the product for breastfeeding or pregnant mums, so thatâ??s good on her. Unfortunately, we cannot say the same for many of the

numerous WoWo distributors online and Iâ??m glad HSA is now following up with the companies involved.

TLDR Summary

- There has been an increasing number of influencers, specifically mummy bloggers, who are promoting and selling slimming pills / drinks / consumables on their Instagram Stories, where the post disappears after 24 hours without a trace.
- The said influencers mentioned in this post includes @vannytelly , @charlottekiew, @shanelkiehls , @kimora.x and @bongqiuqiu , but there could be more that Iâ??m not aware of as these are the main 5 that readers have escalated to me due to their concerns over potential misrepresentation and safety issues.
- The selling tactics generally focus on how it is safe for pregnant and breastfeeding mums, when there is little evidence to prove so. *(Edit: with the exception of QiuQiu who had said on her IG Live that she wouldnâ??t recommend it for these 2 groups.)* Some sellers may even go so far as to claim that it is HSA-approved (not at all), or even offer guaranteed refunds in the event of no result. Make your own decision.
- **Perhaps the influencers knew nothing about the red flags** Iâ??ve highlighted in this post on the products, nor do they know if there are indeed harmful or banned substances, **because they merely shared based on the information they received. But oneâ??s ignorance doesnâ??t negate the fact that the product one is selling could be potentially harmful.**
- As we learnt from the Slim10 saga, it is difficult to attribute liability to distributors of such slimming products, even if they are eventually found to contain trace elements of harmful of banned substances. And yes, even if the pills harm you or cause any deaths due to consumption, it is unlikely that the distributors (or the influencers in this case) will be held legally responsible.
- **If a slimming product sounds too good to be true, it probably is.**
- You should probably also never buy any questionable product online or directly from someone whom you barely know, especially if you cannot confirm the safety of the product or its full ingredients list.

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HSA has repeatedly told Singaporeans to be wary of buying slimming products online. In September last year alone, HSA seized over 39,000 units of illegal health products, many which were weight-loss products ranging from pills to beverages, and were labelled with claims such as â??100 percent naturalâ?•, â??herbal ingredientsâ?• and â??quick effectâ?•.

Do you see a glaring similarity here?

Remember, even if anything detrimental happens to you because you ate these slimming products sold to you by the influencersâ?¦they will probably walk away scot-free with no legal liability.

Your health is your own. Do what you deem fit, but you canâ??t say I didnâ??t warn you.

And pregnant / breastfeeding mums, please, I urge you to play safe rather than be sorry when it comes to these sort of slimming supplements. When in doubt, check with your doctor.

Donâ??t let your moment of vanity become a lifelong regret.

With love,
Budget Babe

Note: All screenshots in this article have been contributed and sent to me by my various readers. I do not claim credit for them, but the watermark is essential after I was recently a victim of a major news website seemingly plagiarising my article and attempting to pass it off as their own.

Category

1. Family

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