

# Resolutions revisited

This week, many people will be counting the cost to their bodies of over-indulgence during the Christmas and New Year celebrations. There is no better antidote than to cut down on calorie intake and alcohol consumption, drink more water and have a few early nights.

However, the market for “detox” products with health-enhancing virtues seems to be limitless. Although it is not pharmacists’ responsibility to stop people spending their money, the scientist in them must be aware that a great deal of what is marketed — and, dare we say, what they sell and customers buy — is hocus-pocus.

The value of some hangover cures was questioned in the *BMJ* in the last issue of 2005 (see p5). This week, the charity Sense About Science puts the boot into the proprietary

products designed to clear the body of toxins and other signs of over-indulgence.

For example, Boots offers five-day detox plans, in strawberry, apple and original flavours, designed to revitalise tired bodies. Among other detox products it carries are a “body freshener” and a face-mask.

Some customers will believe that if pharmacies stock these products they are, in some oblique way, being endorsed by the pharmacist. These are the professionals to

whom many people turn when they want help with stopping smoking and losing weight — and in many people’s minds January means New Year resolutions: smoking, eating and drinking are all said in the same breath.

Although 2006 is only a week old, many people will already have broken the resolutions they made last Sunday. Often the reason is that they have unrealistic expectations of the demands they can make on themselves. Pharmacists might like to remember the following approach for patients they are supporting to give up smoking: make sure the pain is balanced in equal measure by pleasure. For example, money saved by not smoking might be spent on going to the cinema, or some other treat.

More seriously, this issue of *The Journal* is making a small contribution to the debate about obesity and examining the scientific evidence for the part nutraceuticals may play in helping people lose weight (p15).

And long after some gullible people have enjoyed their detox, and are once again eating and drinking as much as ever, there will be many others, still struggling to lose weight for sound health reasons. These are the people who need greater pharmacy support.

## The market for “detox” products with health-enhancing virtues seems to be limitless

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