

Skinny Pill?

By Reg P. Wydeven
February 17, 2007

When I was in college, we had Cinemax as part of our cable package. I remember that one night, my seven roommates and I stayed up until 3 a.m. one Thursday night watching Skyscraper, possibly the worst movie of all time. The reason we subjected ourselves to such pain was because the movie starred Anna Nicole Smith. While she was not nominated for an Oscar, she did disrobe a few times.

As a result of her recent tragic death, Anna Nicole's troubled life has been put under the microscope by the media. Reporters have done stories about her topless dancing past, her prescription drug abuse, her son's overdose that caused his premature death, her battle over her late oil-tycoon husband's fortune, and her newborn baby's paternity.

Another trouble that went largely unnoticed in the hoopla surrounding her death was that Anna Nicole was sued just before she died. Smith and the New Jersey-based drug company TrimSpa Inc. were named in a class action lawsuit alleging their marketing of the weight-loss pill TrimSpa X32 was false or misleading.

Janet Luna and three people identified as her guardians filed the lawsuit in Los Angeles Superior Court that alleged deceptive business practices and a violation of California's unfair competition law. Luna is seeking unspecified damages, restitution and an injunction preventing Smith and TrimSpa from making claims that users of the pills can lose substantial amounts of weight.

Anna Nicole was named in the suit because she was the spokeswoman for TrimSpa X32, having endorsed the product and appeared in a number of ads claiming it helped her restore her voluptuous figure.

The Federal Trade Commission recently announced that TrimSpa had to pay \$1.5 million to settle allegations that weight-loss claims about X32 were unsubstantiated. TrimSpa disputed the FTC's assertions and disagreed with any inference that X32 has no scientific support.

While the FTC had bad news for TrimSpa, the FDA had great news for GlaxoSmithKline, manufacturer of the prescription weight-loss drug orlistat, marketed as Xenical. The Food and Drug Administration recently approved the drug for over-the-counter use, which will be named Alli.

Alli helps overweight folks shed pounds to achieve a sexy body like Anna Nicole Smith's. If taken with meals, the drug works by blocking the absorption of up to 30% of fat. While Alli blocks the absorption of calories, it also blocks the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins. Therefore, it's important that folks take a multivitamin in conjunction with Alli.

So where does all that unabsorbed fat go? Into your colon. That's why the side effects associated with Alli are violent cramps, severe diarrhea and anal leakage. Not quite so sexy anymore. Some doctors worry that the drug causes a far more dangerous side effect – precancerous lesions in the colon – especially when colon cancer is a leading cause of death and disease in the United States.

Obviously, with our image-obsessed society today, skeptics of Alli fear teenage girls may abuse the drug to get thin. Most experts, however, believe the incredibly harsh side effects, which will severely hamper a teenage girl's image, will deter anyone from overusing Alli for long.

The Milwaukee Brewers will reportedly begin providing Alli to players because its use is supposed to result in the runs.