

2017 Annual Scientific Meeting
FIT Open Mic Abstracts

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PRESENTATION INFORMATION

Title of Presentation:

Dying to Be Thin - A Brief History of America's Most Deadly Diet Drugs

Abstract:

Beginning in the late 19th and early 20th centuries there was a shift in American culture and body image. This shift, perpetuated by advertising and Hollywood led to the development of multiple pharmaceuticals to aid in weight loss and treat obesity. The last 130 years brought multiple pharmaceuticals that promised weight loss, but instead caused significant harm and death. The list of these drugs is long, beginning with desiccated thyroid hormone in the 1890s and more recently Fenfluramine in the 1990s. 2,4-Dinitrophenol (DNP) became a popular over the counter weight loss drug in the 1930s, even after the first occupational death from (DNP) was reported in 1918. By 1938 it was labeled unfit for human consumption by the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act of 1938. In 1981, there was a resurgence of DNP, then marketed as "Mitcal" by Dr. Bachynsky, a physician practicing in Texas who was eventually imprisoned for fraud after treating thousands of people. Amphetamines became popular in the 1930s for multiple indications including weight loss and soon after use of "Rainbow Pills" became widespread in the 1940s. These pills often contained amphetamines, laxatives and thyroid hormone and were mixed with beta-blockers, steroids, barbiturates and cardiac glycosides and were removed from the market in the 1960s. Fenfluramine followed in the 1970s and was eventually pulled from the market in the 1990s. America's obsession with thinness has continued into the 21st century. The quest for a miracle non-toxic weight loss drug is ongoing and elusive.

Objective 1:

Review the history of pharmaceuticals marketed for weight loss.

Objective 2:

Describe toxicity associated with DNP, "Rainbow Pills," and Fenfluramine

Objective 3:

Discuss ethical considerations of weight loss drug marketing strategies