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WEIGHT MANAGEMENT | HERBS & BOTANICALS | COMMENTARY

Beyond the GLP-1 buzz: What new botanical research means for formulators and brands

Clinical trial demonstrates two plant extracts significantly increase endogenous GLP-1 levels while improving satiety, body composition and metabolic markers. What it means for weight management positioning.

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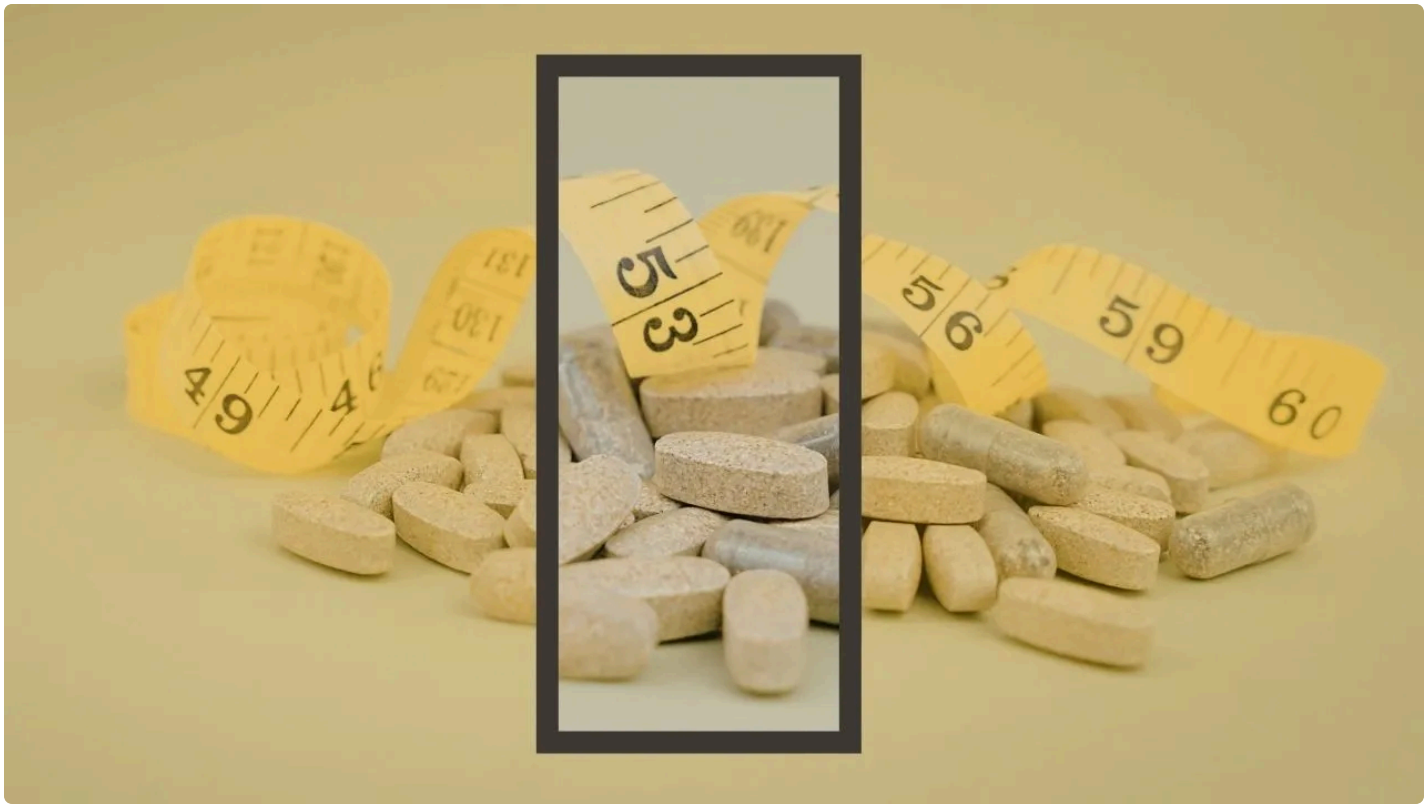

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16 weeks.

Botanicals work by inhibiting the DPP-4 enzyme, allowing naturally produced GLP-1 to remain active longer.

A multi-pathway approach to weight management offers stronger differentiation than a single-hormone focus.

A national smoothie chain offers a “GLP-1 support” 20-ounce drink with more calories, sodium and cholesterol than an original glazed doughnut from Krispy Kreme. While the example may be extreme, it is also emblematic of how the GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide) bandwagon has become a speeding train.

From restaurant menus to packaged products, GLP-1 language now appears everywhere. Every ingredient category — from fibers to botanicals to probiotics — seems to be reframed through a GLP-1 lens. The GLP-1 era has transformed weight management, but it has also created a marketplace crowded with overlapping claims, influencer hype and uneven science.

In this environment, distinguishing real metabolic biology from clever positioning has become one of the industry’s central challenges. It also has created a marketing dilemma: Should brands join the GLP-1 chorus or take another path and risk being left out of the conversation?

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New human clinical research on two botanical extracts — *Dichrostachys glomerata* and *Cissus quadrangularis* — adds meaningful data to this discussion and may help reframe those choices. The question for formulators and brands is not simply whether this research supports GLP-1-related claims. The deeper issue is how to use the science responsibly and strategically in a marketplace already saturated with GLP-1 language.

Study shows clinically meaningful increases in GLP-1 activity

comparison or marketing claims.

The findings showed that both botanical extracts significantly inhibited dipeptidyl peptidase-4 (DPP-4), the enzyme responsible for breaking down naturally produced GLP-1. By reducing DPP-4 activity, circulating endogenous GLP-1 remained active for longer periods, resulting in an approximate 300% increase in GLP-1 activity. Importantly, these outcomes reflect support of normal physiological GLP-1 signaling rather than pharmacological stimulation.

This sustained elevation in endogenous GLP-1 triggered a cascade of clinically meaningful effects, including significant increases in satiety scores, reductions in calorie intake, decreases in body weight and body fat. Key metabolic biomarkers also improved, including fasting glucose, lipid parameters and waist circumference.

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What the study means for product claims

This may be the first human clinical study to demonstrate robust and sustainable increases in endogenous GLP-1 activity through DPP-4 inhibition using botanical extracts. However, the results do not expand the universe of Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 (DSHEA)-compliant structure-function claims related to GLP-1 support.

Instead, the data substantially strengthen the scientific foundation for existing claims around satiety, appetite control and metabolic health. These areas are already well understood by regulators and important to consumers. Examples include:

- Supports healthy GLP-1 activity.
- Supports appetite regulation.
- Supports satiety.
- Supports healthy blood sugar metabolism.
- Supports metabolic health.

intake, body composition and metabolic markers.

Related: Weight management in a GLP-1 world: Balancing mood, muscle and metabolism

From a regulatory perspective, the data place brands on stronger footing by raising the quality of the scientific substantiation behind their product claims.

Navigating product positioning the GLP-1 era

Stepping back from individual claims, a broader strategic question remains: How prominent should GLP-1 be in overall product positioning for weight management and metabolic health?

Many products now lead aggressively with GLP-1 messaging, which makes sense given widespread consumer awareness of GLP-1 drugs and the surge in media coverage. However, in a marketplace already saturated with GLP-1 language, a narrow, single-hormone positioning strategy carries risks. It can dilute product differentiation and invite problematic comparisons to pharmaceuticals.

A better approach is to position GLP-1 as an entry point rather than the entire story. A dozen clinical studies supporting *Dichrostachys glomerata* and *Cissus quadrangularis* illustrate how these botanicals modulate multiple complementary pathways — including GLP-1, insulin, leptin and adiponectin — to support appetite regulation, energy intake, body composition and metabolic health.

This positioning better reflects human physiology.

Weight management is not governed by a single hormone or pathway, but by an interconnected network involving appetite signaling, glucose and lipid metabolism, inflammatory status and hormonal sensitivity. GLP-1 plays a meaningful role within this network — but it does not operate in isolation.

Looking beyond the GLP-1 moment

GLP-1 therapies are, without question, a breakthrough in weight management and metabolic health. At the same time, the GLP-1 era has produced a crowded marketplace of “me-too” natural products built on similar claims and uneven science that may confuse and befuddle consumers.

Taken together with previous studies, these findings reinforce a clear takeaway for brands: follow the science.

Positioning products around a multi-pathway understanding of metabolic health — rather than a single hormone — offers a more credible, differentiated and durable strategy in an increasingly crowded GLP-1 marketplace.

About the Author

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Shil Kothari is the president of Gateway Health Alliances Inc., a health and wellness ingredient company specializing in research and development of proprietary nutritional ingredients coupled with strategic sales and marketing solutions for the food, beverage and nutrition industries.…

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Key Clinical Takeaways

- Clinically meaningful reductions in body weight and body fat percentage
- Lower calorie intake with increased satiety, without prescribed dieting
- Improved metabolic biomarkers, including glucose and lipid profiles
- Demonstrated DPP-4 inhibition supporting sustained endogenous GLP-1 activity
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