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US Competition To Connect Obesity Drug Patients With Supplements Attracts Retail Heavyweights

by [Malcolm Spicer](#)

Vitamin Shoppe announces Whole Health Rx telehealth services offering supplements for GLP-1 patients and access to doctors for prescribing the drugs a week after GNC said it was “first major retailer to establish an entire section dedicated to assisting GLP-1 users.”

Competition in the US for marketing dietary supplements to consumers using GLP-1 drugs for weight loss is extending beyond consumer health lines to a national health and wellness retailer packaging prescribing services with curated nutritional products.

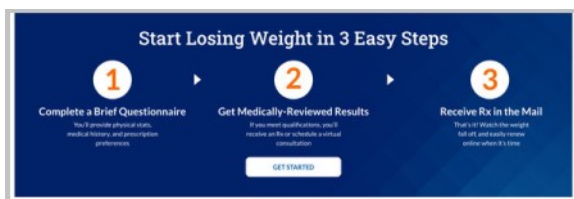
Vitamin Shoppe Inc. announced its Whole Health Rx telehealth services on 8 May not only offering supplements for GLP-1 patients to optimize weight loss, but also providing access to doctors for prescribing the drugs.

VSI’s announcement comes a week after GNC Holdings LLC said it was “the world’s first major retailer to establish an entire section dedicated to assisting GLP-1 users” through a section it will feature in all the more than 2,300 GNC locations in the US.

Both chains’ marketing initiatives targeting consumers prescribed glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonist drugs indicated for type 2 diabetes and obesity come as numerous vitamin, mineral and supplement product brands tailor offerings for the same market.

“Data shows that a significant percentage of the population is not meeting the daily requirements for key nutrients, such as vitamins C, D, and magnesium. This problem will be further exacerbated by the use of GLP-1 medications which decrease overall food intake,” said Brian Tanzer, VSI’s scientific and regulatory affairs director,

in the
firm's



Source: Vitamin Shoppe



WITH WHOLE HEALTH RX, VITAMIN SHOPPE OFFERS SUPPLEMENTS FOR GLP-1 PATIENTS TO OPTIMIZE WEIGHT LOSS ON TOP OF ACCESS TO DOCTORS PRESCRIBING THE DRUGS.

announcement.

However, after earlier in 2024 launching a product to market to customers prescribed GLP-1 drugs for weight loss, a major brand, direct seller Herbalife Ltd., is downplaying the potential market.

Herbalife announced with its latest results on 1 May that its distributors haven't found demand for its Herbalife GLP-1 Nutrition Companion package featuring its nutritional shake, protein drink and fiber complex mixes to support the nutritional needs of consumers prescribed GLP-1 and other weight loss medications. (Also see "[Herbalife's Rising Digital Platform Floats All Boats Other Than Marketing To GLP-1 Patients](#)" - HBW Insight, 6 May, 2024.)

In April, Abbott said its nutritionals business got a boost during the first quarter from the January launch of Protality nutrition shake for adults trying to lose weight, which the firm had said it developed to target the market of GLP-1 patients. (Also see "[Abbott's 'Bedrock Of Good Health' Nutritionals Business Faces Mounting Infant Formula Litigation](#)" - HBW Insight, 17 Apr, 2024.)

Health Benefit, Or Indication?

Demand or not for VMS products promoted to help GLP-1 patients succeed in weight loss, marketers may find that the Food and Drug Administration doesn't agree about advertising the products with language that somehow links the formulations to disease indications.

FDA regulations allow labeling or other advertising to state health benefits from the use of VMS products. However, advertising, including labeling as well as language on websites or documents associated with a supplement, linking a product or a dietary ingredient to a disease indication or to a pharmaceutical ingredient associated with a disease renders a VMS product an unapproved drug under the agency's regulations.

The FDA, since its regulatory framework for VMS product manufacturing, labeling and marketing was established in 1994 with the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act, consistently has been quick to warn businesses when advertising too closely associates their supplements with a

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drug or a disease. (Also see "[US Supplement Market Regulation: Depression Claim, Undisclosed Drug, COVID Tincture](#)" - HBW Insight, 19 Feb, 2021.)

The first GLP-1, AstraZeneca PLC's Byetta (exenatide), was approved in the US for type 2 diabetes in 2005. However, use of the class has exploded in recent years with approvals of additional compounds and the expansion of indications to include weight management in people who are overweight or obese; the first approval in the category for weight management was for Novo Nordisk's Saxenda (liraglutide) in 2014. (Also see "[GLP-1s Show No Causal Link To Suicidal Thoughts, Actions In Preliminary FDA Review; Sentinel Scan Is Next](#)" - Pink Sheet, 11 Jan, 2024.)

A pharmacist advising GNC on its products recommended for consumers attempting to lose weight noted that GLP-1 use has grown for a reason.

"The rapid adoption of GLP-1 agonists is no surprise given the impressive weight loss results they demonstrate. Not only can they decrease the user's [body mass index] but they also carry metabolic and cardiovascular benefits as well," said Revive Pharmacy Solutions president John Olsen in GNC's 29 April announcement.

Rx Brands, API Compounds Offered

Secaucus, NJ-based VSI says it's launching Whole Health Rx initially with a focus on weight-management, "offering virtual, streamlined access to GLP-1 agonist medications ... via licensed medical providers."



INITIAL FOCUS AREAS IN GNC'S GLP-1 SUPPORT SECTION COMING TO ALL ITS US

It says the drugs available for prescription through its service include the brands Ozempic, Mounjaro and Rybelsus, and compounded formulations of semaglutide and tirzepatide, the active ingredients in those GLP-1s.

The telehealth services are paired with VSI's education resources and nutritionist-recommended supplements. Whole Health Rx uses a WellSync virtual care platform to connect patients with healthcare providers in real time.

The process begins with an online questionnaire for medical history and goals and, if necessary, a live video interview for further assessment. If approved, prescriptions will be fulfilled through Whole Health Rx's pharmacy partners and delivered in the mail. Monthly subscriptions start with "introductory

STORES INCLUDE GI HEALTH, MUSCLE MASS AND BONE DENSITY AND NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT. *Source: GNC*

reduction in muscle mass when losing weight; multivitamin for vitamins and minerals when significantly limiting food intake; probiotic to support the microbiome and healthy digestion; and fiber supplements to meet daily requirements for this macronutrient as appetite decreases.

pricing” of \$219 before increasing to \$269.

VSI says nutritionist-recommended products for GLP-1 users include protein supplements to help offset a

“As a pioneer in the wellness space since 1977, The Vitamin Shoppe is uniquely positioned to offer a truly holistic approach to weight loss that unites proven pharmaceutical interventions with our unmatched expertise in nutrition support and whole-body health. As we continue to enhance The Vitamin Shoppe's position as the leading destination for lifelong wellness, Whole Health Rx will expand to meet other health needs beyond weight management,” said CEO Lee Wright in the firm’s announcement.

Former GLP-1 Patients Also Targeted

Meanwhile, Pittsburgh- based GNC noted in its announcement that around 130m USD consumers have a condition indicated for treatment with a GLP-1 agonist, and that up to 70m may use a GLP-1 by 2028.

However, those numbers also point to many of those consumers needing additional nutritional products. That’s because studies indicate more than 50% of GLP-1 users discontinue treatment within the first year, with many citing side effects or the financial burden as the main drivers.

“The results of GLP-1 agonists are truly life-changing, but we also know that lifestyle and nutrition support are necessary companions to achieving long-term success,” said GNC CEO Michael Costello

Initial focus areas in GNC’s GLP-1 support section include gastrointestinal health; muscle mass and bone density; and nutritional support.

The firm also says its GLP-1 support program also will expert advice on GNC.com centered around fitness and resistance training, healthy recipes and meal plans. It has engaged researchers and practicing clinicians to structure support and offer the most benefits to GLP-1 users. This includes ongoing consultation with experts at Revive Health, the medical service linked to the GNC Health virtual care platform.