

# LETTERS

## ANIMAL PRODUCTS IN MEDICINE

# Formularies should list animal derived excipients of drugs

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Shiwani reminds us that patients are not always aware that surgical implants may originate from animal tissue.<sup>1</sup> Doctors may also be unaware that they are prescribing drugs with excipients derived from animals.<sup>2</sup>

For example, many oral vitamin D or calcium supplements contain porcine or bovine products, as shown in the Electronic Medicines Compendium ([www.medicines.org.uk](http://www.medicines.org.uk)). This is a potential prescribing hazard, given that vitamin D supplements are often used to treat deficiencies arising from cultural or dietary abstention.<sup>3</sup> The *British National Formulary* does not list gelatin as an excipient of vitamin supplements.<sup>4</sup> Its presence can be confirmed in the summary of product characteristics of the various types of preparations.

Clearer listing of excipients is needed in formularies to aid prescribers in informing patients.<sup>2</sup>

Competing interests: None declared.

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- 3 Glerup H, Mikkelsen K, Poulsen L, Hass E, Overbeck S, Thomsen J, et al. Commonly recommended daily intake of vitamin D is not sufficient if sunlight exposure is limited. *J Intern Med* 2000;247:260-8.
- 4 *British National Formulary*. 61st ed: BMJ Publishing Group, 2011.

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