

The Top 10 Supplement Industry News Stories of 2014

written by Mike Roberto | January 1, 2015

2014 was an exciting year for the supplement and sports nutrition industry. The new met the old as a few new breakout brands and ingredients took the stage, while two well-known companies were driven into bankruptcy protection.

But all of that was overshadowed by the scandal and drama related to amino acid spiking and the subsequent class action lawsuits, followed by the late banning of PH's.

Below, we discuss the **Top 10 News Stories of 2014**, and allude to what's next at the bottom of each point. In a future post, we'll talk about our predictions for 2015.

1. Drama and Scandal in Stack3d's Protein Wars



Our followers know that we're huge fans of the Stack3d Supplement news, which not only brings up-to-date information with industry happenings, but also has a great number of social media contests and competitions.

The biggest of which is the Protein Wars, which is a tournament of protein powders where different products face head-to-head, and the users get to vote on which one makes it to the next round, ultimately crowning a single champion.

This year, Stack3d's following grew to such heights that it drew the attention of some major players, and in the semifinal round of MTS Nutrition's Machine Whey Protein vs. MuscleTech's Platinum Whey Protein, there was allegedly "fishy" behavior on the behalf of MuscleTech's vote counts.

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MuscleTech initially won the contest, but after analyzing the data, it was clear that the votes had been rigged in MuscleTech's favor (I was privileged

to see the data – it looked *bad*).

Resolved the right way

MuscleTech took the high road and forfeited their victory, claiming that they had nothing to do with the purchased votes. MTS Nutrition went on to the final round against Cellucor's COR Performance Whey, for a repeat of last year's championship battle.

And ultimately, it was indeed MTS who won this year's protein wars![1]

Regarding the scandal, it's our belief that the votes were purchased by a distributor, rep, or "fanboi" of MuscleTech's, and the company, owned by Iovate, had nothing to do with the scandal.

If anything, it proves that Stack3d has made themselves quite a name in the industry, which is news in itself – they're now big enough to be worth the drama.

2. Scivation releases world's first BCAA RTD bottle



We've been waiting for this one for quite a while – a ready-to-drink BCAA-based "sports drink" that has an efficacious dosage of branched chain amino acids, electrolytes, and other supporting ingredients.

BCAAs have best been used intraworkout (during workouts) for endurance athletes and dieters who train fasted (on an empty stomach). However, properly suspending the aminos in a bottle while keeping costs reasonable seemed to be a major issue.

Despite MusclePharm being the first company to make *noise* of an amino-based RTD, **Scivation** was the first company to actually deliver, with the new **Xtend RTD**.

Over the next few years, we look forward to seeing these two companies (and others in the sports nutrition industry) take on major players such as Gatorade and Powerade. We've long known the benefits of BCAA supplementation – especially during extreme activity or while dieting – but when will the rest of the world catch on?

Mike McCandless, CEO of Scivation, has told us that they have a lot more coming out in 2015. Stay tuned here on PricePLOW for all of that and more.

3. **New Protein Platforms Successfully Launched (Chips and Candy!)**



Speaking of mass adoption, it's finally becoming well-known that a high-protein diet is the most important factor in successful weight loss and body composition improvements.[2,3]

In response, dieters and athletes alike have been looking to find ways to "hack" more protein into their diets, in lieu of snacks with nothing but fats and carbs.

2014's two biggest new protein launches were actually not protein powders, but snacks: **Quest Protein Chips** and **BPI's FunnBar**.

Suitable replacements



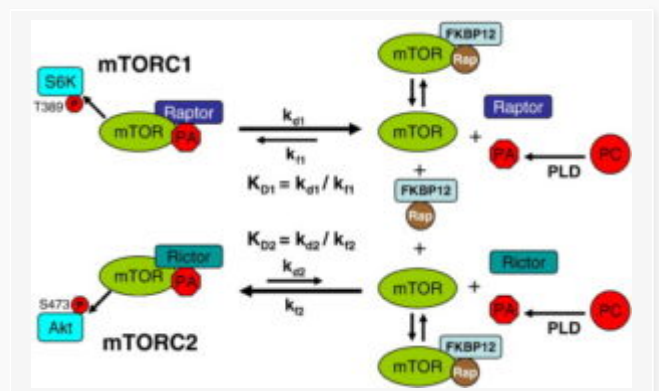
Looks like protein Starbursts!

While they're not perfect replacements for Baked Lay's (what Quest Chips seem to be most modeled off of) or Starburst (the candy that FunNBar is most similar to), they're definitely suitable, and provide far better macronutrients.

Dieters who complain that they "need something crunchy" or "want some candy" can turn to these two products and perhaps be sufficiently satisfied. They're more expensive and not as tasty, but if the results involve getting another 15-20g of protein in while not eating total garbage, they're definitely worth it.

We look forward to more protein-based releases in 2015, and are sure Quest will be coming out with more and more as they continue to promote healthy chefs worldwide. BPI is also expanding their branding wings with the new Roxy flavored weight loss softgel.

4. New Ingredients like Phosphatidic Acid, HMB Free Acid, HydroMax, Theacrine, and NitroSagine finally hit the streets



You wouldn't see us complain if every year brought as many great new ingredients to the table as 2014 did. Here's a list in no particular order:

- **Phosphatidic Acid**

Long ago, we excitedly wrote about **phosphatidic acid**, a new anabolic supplement that seems to have no downsides. It's finally been released in the form of Jay Cutler's King (run by BPI Sports), fuel:one's PhosphaBuild (owned by Iovate, the MuscleTech company), EPIQ's Phosphatidic Acid (also owned by Iovate), and BioTest's Micro-PA.

- **HMB Free Acid – MuscleTech's Clear Muscle**

Meanwhile, **HMB Free Acid** was released in the form of MuscleTech's Clear Muscle, which received a lot of press, and users seem to be receiving great recovery benefits (but perhaps not much else unless they follow the insane training program that came with the research).

- **HydroMax – A better glycerol**

Glanbia released **HydroMax**, a new form of glycerol that has more actual glycerol by weight than glycerol monostearate. This ingredient was immediately incorporated into products like PES' High Volume (currently #4 on our top pre workout supplements page), ANS Dilate powder, and MuscleTech's Anarchy, and will likely be in several more in 2015.

- **Amentoflavone – From good moods to great strength gains**

Two new stimulant-free pre workout supplements (see next section) also contain **Amentoflavone**, which is a mood- and strength-booster initially added to the popular PES Norcodrene supplement (which is all over our top fat burner guide and has free samples available). It can be found standalone in Analyzed Supplements' AmentoMAX product, and users are loving it mainly for the strength gains, while the mood boost has kept repeat business of Norcodrene at a high level.

- **Arginine silicate – finally out in the wild**



Last year, we also wrote about **arginine silicate**, a new nitric oxide booster which was finally released in the form of NitroSagine. Popular pre workouts such as Gaspari's SuperPump 3.0, ALLMAX' Razor8, and the new MuscleTech Anarchy include the ingredient, and all pre workouts are doing quite well.

- **Theacrine – Caffeine's cool new cousin**

We've recently written about **Theacrine**, which is a new stimulant that will be a popular counterpart to caffeine, helping to diminish the tolerance that users gain for caffeine. Purus Labs' Theatrim was the first to contain it, followed by Cellucor's new C4 pre workout, which added it in the form of its trademarked *TeaCor* version. Cellucor's new 4th Generation (G4) series also received much note, and is slated to release several different C4 variations in 2015, nearly all of which will have this new ingredient inside.

- **Epicatechin – The reason dark chocolate rules**

Finally, **epicatechin**, a flavonol from chocolate, started to hit the muscle-building world, and is sure to take off in 2015 due to more strict anabolic laws (discussed below).

If anything, we've learned that eating 85% dark chocolate is indeed awesome. We have a separate article coming out on Epicatechin within a week, and you'll see why then.

5. The year of the stim-free pre workout supplement powder



On the note of some of the non-stimulant ingredients mentioned above, the stimulant-free pre workout supplements category absolutely exploded this year, with the aforementioned High Volume, Giant Sports Giant Pump, ANS Dilate Powder, Purus Labs Noxygen, MAN Sports NOOPUMP, Chaos and Pain's Cannibal PermaSwole, and others, including a new Hemavol Max and Cellucor C4 "Mass" set for 2015.

The number of releases have been borderline insane, and we know of more coming from other companies, and it's tough to pick favorites. They're all great, and it really comes down to what you want:

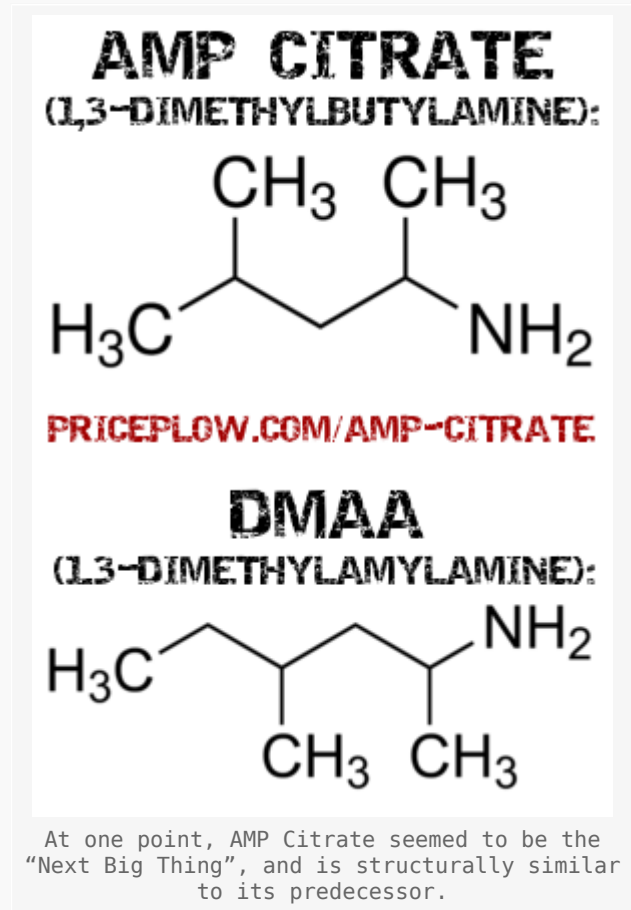
- *Nitrate*-based products like PES High Volume and Giant Pump provide the longest-lasting pumps
- *Nootropic*-based products like NOOPUMP provide great focus, especially for those nighttime workouts when you don't want to stack stimulants in.
- *Amentoflavone*-based products like High Volume and ANS Dilate are yielding additional strength gains as well, firing users up with a bit more calcium for their muscle contractions.

Meanwhile, you have caffeine-free versions of new pre workouts such as the new NO-Xplode formula (which admittedly doesn't provide much in the form of pumps).

But at some point, we have to wonder... how many more can the market bear? We love these products when it fits the budget, but are this many people really buying these up? Apparently so...

6. AMP Citrate comes and goes

AMP Citrate came advertised early on in the year as the “next big stimulant” – it was *maybe* found in small doses in pouchong tea. Many claimed it to be the “lite” version of its predecessor stim, as its effects are similar to the embattled and banned stimulant, but on a weaker scale.



Unfortunately, despite the argument that its predecessor stim was considered safe in normal doses, industry stalwarts such as the USA Today published hatchet-jobs that completely destroyed the stimulant’s reputation before it had any chance to catch wind (despite being what seems to be quite a pleasant and relatively safe ingredient).

A [potentially very biased] study demonstrated that many AMP Citrate containing products did not contain the claimed doses of AMP Citrate (or had none at all), and went on to argue that it should be pulled from the shelves due to lack of human research on the ingredient.[4]

Interestingly, VPX Sports wrote an incredible post blasting the media and scientists over their published works[5], but it seems to have been for naught – most companies are getting away from the ingredient, and most supplement manufacturers want nothing to do with it. This is a shame, since it seemed to be quite a nice stim.

Products with the ingredient are still available – see them listed on our full AMP Citrate article (where you can also read about the above drama) – but they'll likely be abandoned sooner than later.

Overall a major bummer. So what's next?

Even crazier: Hi-Tech Sues the FDA!

An update to this post is that in 2014, Hi-Tech Pharmaceuticals sued the FDA and released *two* products that blatantly contained the stiulant at hand:

- Jack'd Up (Jack3d Replacement)
- HydroxyElite (OxyELITE Pro Replacement)

It will be VERY interesting to see what happens in 2015!

7. The bankruptcy / sale of Gaspari Nutrition and overall industry consolidation



In the fall, word got out that Gaspari Nutrition was for sale. Drama ensued as they were bought, but had to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy as a part of the sale, which led to bankruptcy court and an open auction to the highest bidder for roughly \$10.1 million USD.

Since Gaspari had over \$16 million in liabilities, several creditors will not be paid money owed to them, as is the case in bankruptcy filings.

In more recent news, Ultimate Nutrition also had to file bankruptcy – a company with a similar valuation.

Update – We forgot to mention this one:

Also of note is the bankruptcy and Natrol, who defaulted back in June.[6] Natrol had \$70 million in debt and was sold for \$132.5 million in a November auction.[7]

Consolidations

While the industry will always have several newcomers and small companies entering the fray, mid-sized companies began consolidating, such as Lecheek's purchase of Genomyx, PES' acquisition of Athletix, and PNI's growth as they purchased a few new brands under their umbrella company, NutraGenix.

Distribution Expansion

Meanwhile, the monster brands such as MusclePharm, Iovate, Cellucor / Nutrabolt, and BPI Sports continue to churn out new spin-off brands, in an effort to take up more shelf space and work different marketing angles.

TigerFitness also seems to be building up an online empire, with Physiques of Greatness and Big J's joining MTS Nutrition and EthiTech in their distribution fray – more are rumored to come.

As a note, if you're a buyer, you'll want to check out our exclusive Tiger Fitness coupon, since you'll find the best deals on all of those products above using it.

Stay tuned for our Industry "Family Tree" post, where we'll lay out who owns what in a nice hierarchical infochart.

8. **Dr. Oz grilled in congress over green coffee bean extract and other recommended supplements; Poorly performed studies skew sales**

Although not widely covered in the sports nutrition world, major news was broken when the study that **Dr. Oz** had been citing in his daytime TV show was **retracted** by Scranton University doctors *Joe Vinson* and *Bryan Burnham*, due to the use of **falsified data**.^[8]

The study was so hopelessly flawed that no reliable conclusions could be drawn from it

The FTC (Federal Trade Commission) was quoted in saying that *"the study was so hopelessly flawed that no reliable conclusions could be drawn from it"*.

Miracle pill claims to massive audiences? Prepare for fines.

This led to much scrutiny of Dr. Oz's practices, which have been claimed to be extremely questionable (example: he called it a "miracle pill"), and included an appearance in front of congress.

The FTC ultimately dished out \$3.5 million in fines due to the debacle.^[9]

A majority of Dr. Oz's claims in 2013 were not based on any known science



It has also been shown that 54% of his claims (from 2013) are not based in any scientific grounding whatsoever, and a certain number of them are flat out wrong.[10]

Because of the fact that Dr. Oz has such a high viewership and the show is so enterprising, congress is holding him to a higher standard, and the doctor has claimed he will “*tone down*” his language but still believes in green coffee bean.

This will be covered in much more detail here soon. In the meantime, our Best Fat Burner buyer's guide is your place for science-backed information (with over 130 sources cited) with regards to fat burners. Green coffee bean is not such an ingredient.

Fish Oil Sales take a Drop due to overblown prostate study

While on the subject of questionably marketed studies, a major impact is still being felt on the fish oil industry (with sales consistently falling) due to a study attempting to connect omega-3 fatty acids to higher risk of prostate cancer.

Examine has an incredible article showing how the methodologies used in the study are one big convoluted statistical and experimental mess[11], and the data doesn't prove anything serious. At this point, the pro's still heavily outweigh any possible cons.

However, that didn't stop major news outlets like FOX, CBS, NBC, the New York Times, and Men's Health from jumping to conclusions with haunting headlines in an effort to get clicks.

And for that reason, fish oil sales are still lagging[12], despite the fact that they reduce mortality[13,14], amongst several other benefits.

sigh

9. **PH's officially banned due to the signing of the DASCA law**



It is done. Hussein Obama signed it into law, they're are now officially banned and outlawed in the US.

At the end of the year, the Senate passed **DASCA**, which closed down basically every PH / anabolic loophole. It also pushes enforcement to the DEA, a far more trigger-happy organization.

This ultimately makes them completely illegal, and there was no grace period for retail sales when the law was passed.

It's still to be determined where all of the chips will fall, and how hard the DEA will enforce this new law, but it closes down a relatively gray market and will have new users looking for legal alternatives (or moving to purely illegal means of getting gear).

The state of the anabolic supplement industry will be in much flux during 2015, and some companies and retail stores will likely go out of business or enter the black market in the first half of the year.

You can read a full discussion on our 2014 DASCA post, and soon, we hope to write a post about "what's next".

10. Amino acid spiking scandal catches full steam, several class action lawsuits filed, more transparency initiated

Industry insiders have long known about amino acid spiking, the act of putting low-cost free form amino acids into protein powders in order to boost the amount of “protein” on the supplement’s label, even though those free form aminos are not dietary protein.

Supplement Facts
Serving Size 1 Scoop (36g)
Servings Per Container: Approximately 26

Amount Per Serving
Calories 160
Calories from Fat 35

(Based on a 2,000 calorie diet)

	% Daily Value		% Daily Value
Total Fat 3.5g	5%	Calcium 145mg	3%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%	Total Carbohydrate 27g	2%
Iron 1mg	3%	Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Cholesterol 40mg	13%	Sugars 2g	4%
Sodium 45mg	2%	Total Protein 24g	50%

Vitamin A 40% (20% from Carotenoids) • Vitamin B6 50% • Calcium 50% • Vitamin E 10%
Vitamin D 50% • Vitamin B12 50% • Thiamin 50% • Riboflavin 50%
Niacin 50% • Vitamin B9 50% • Folic Acid 50% • Vitamin C 50% • Vitamin K 50%
Biotin 50% • Vitamin B5 50% • Phosphorus 50% • Magnesium 50%
Manganese 100% • Chromium 50% • Selenium 50% • Zinc 50%
Copper 50% • Iron 3%

Essential Amino Acids		Typical Analysis	
L-Valine (BCAA)*	1773 mg	L-Leucine (BCAA)*	1773 mg
L-Isoleucine	1066 mg	L-Isoleucine (BCAA)*	1066 mg
L-Tryptophan	314 mg	L-Histidine	314 mg
L-Threonine*	4613 mg	L-Glycine	4613 mg
L-Serine	3201 mg	L-Glutamine	3201 mg
L-Proline	337 mg	L-Cystine	337 mg
L-Phenylalanine*	1856 mg	L-Aspartamine	1856 mg
L-Methionine*	429 mg	L-Arginine	429 mg
L-Lysine*	873 mg	L-Alanine	873 mg

INGREDIENTS: Protein Blend (Whey Protein Concentrate, Whey Protein Isolate, Micellar Casein), Glycine, Taurine, Nutritional Creamer (Sunflower Oil, Corn Syrup Solids, Sodium Caseinate, Mono & Diglycerides, Dipotassium Phosphate, Tri-Calcium Phosphate and Tocopherols), Xanthan Gum, Natural and Artificial Flavors, Cinnamon, Silicon Dioxide, Salt, Sucralose. **ALLERGEN WARNING:** Contains Milk & Soy

Class Action Lawsuit on Amino Acid Spiking

In 2013, a discussion thread in the BB.com forums started a steamroll issue, and industry advocates such as Marc Lobliner, Jim Stoppani, and even PricePlow educated and railed against the deceptive and scammy practice.

In the second half of 2014, the scandal caught full wind as attorney (and fitness junkie) Nick Suciú filed several class action lawsuits against various companies – with lab tests attached – including a couple that didn’t even have free form amino acids listed on the label.

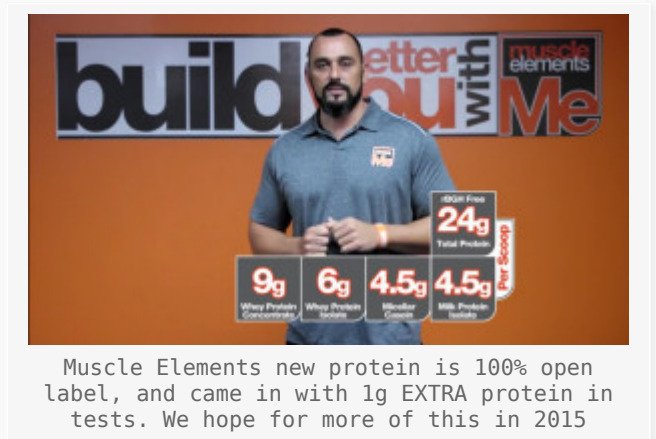
Stack3d was the first in the industry to come up with a reasonable solution to the problem, with the Stack3d certified program. This includes a process where the protein powder gets purchased from a random retailer and sent to a lab that performs a full free form amino acid profile.

The manufacturer pays for the testing of the product, but does not provide the protein themselves. Since it comes from a random retailer (like one that any of us would purchase from), it’s about as realistic of a test as anyone

has come up with.

As of yet, the three proven protein powders are PES Select Protein, Muscle Element's TRUTH, and American Muscle's Premium Whey.

Open labels and transparency



Scandals like the one above have led to much more open labeling, with breakout brands such as JYM and Muscle Elements providing exact dosing of what's in their protein powders.

More companies are using these non-proprietary, open formulas for their other supplements such as pre workouts and fat burners, a trend which will likely continue into 2015 as savvy consumers become more tuned into what ingredient doses they are getting.

POM vs. Coke Implications?

In April, the US Supreme Court declared that POM could sue Coca-Cola over Coke's "Pomegranate Blueberry Flavored Blend", since Coke's blend contains nearly no pomegranate juice (0.3% to be exact), and could possibly tarnish POM's reputation (whose product does contain pomegranate).[15]

This is the first time a company can sue over another company's label. The actual lawsuit seems to be in progress now, but it's very possible (or likely) that the ever-dramatic sports nutrition industry will use the Supreme Court's decision to bring lawsuits to their own competition.

That's 2014 in a nutshell! Lots of good stuff, but lots of drama and sad news for some.

One thing is for sure, though: As this industry gets bigger, the scams get more elaborate, the pockets get deeper, but ultimately, the science and research is out there for those who actually care to find it and read it.

On top of providing as many good supplement deals and coupons as possible, we look forward to bringing you that science. Stay tuned!

Coming soon: our top predictions for 2015.

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