# Beware Bottles Bearing Red Ribbons

July 21, 2008 By Peter Staley

So I was glancing through one of NYC's local gay nightlife rags, NEXT Magazine, when I came upon a full page color ad with lots of the infamous red ribbons jumping out at me. Trust me, I no longer partake in the city's gay nightlife, but the Crystal Meth Working Group has run its ad campaigns in NEXT, so I occasionally check to see what sort of other health-related ads are running there.

This one was for an herbal supplement called Sahvid, and its byline is "helping to fight the effects of hiv/aids the natural way."

That's weird? I don't remember seeing any clinical trials on this at all the conferences I've attended. Weirder still, the ad and the bottles say Sahvid is "FDA Approved," and include the FDA logo. And the ad listed a toll-free number for more info: 1-800-000-0000. Hmmm.

So I called Richard Klein, the HIV/AIDS Program Director at the FDA, and he quickly upgraded Sahvid's red ribbon to a red flag, shooting off an email to the FDA's Drug Compliance Director for a possible investigation. Sahvid in not "FDA approved," and they can't make claims about helping fight HIV/AIDS until they've proven it to the FDA.

Sahvid's website is even worse, saying:

> Sahvid is a Natural Ayurvedic product that has been specially formulated to enhance the Immune System and fight against the effects of HIV/Aids. To date Human Trials have shown extremely positive results.

So I clicked on the "Clinical Reports" link, and that page said "Various Clinical Reports will be available for download PDF Format shortly." At least the big "Purchase Online" button works. Just give them a major credit card, and you can buy a six-month supply for only $1,019.99, shipped from India!

Long story short, NEXT has agreed to pull the ads from future issues until the company can substantiate its claims. Kudos to NEXT! They give a lot of money and free ad space to AIDS groups, so I don?t want to knock them. I only wish they had taken the 30 seconds I took to search the FDA’s website for Sahvid’s name.

Late last week, word got back to Sahvid that I was fishing around, and Eric Ewell, a consultant working for the company, called me to explain. He said “the ad should not have run,” and that it was all a big misunderstanding with NEXT. Okay, but what about that website that’s still open for business? That one stumped him. What about drug interaction studies with the leading ARVs? Stumped again.

If any of my readers see Sahvid ads anywhere else, let me know. Our community doesn’t need untested pills in bottles bearing pretty red ribbons.

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