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## A Mineral Miracle

SierraSil Health says its namesake product can cure arthritic joint pain in 14 days or less—and it has the research to prove it

By Matt Alderton



A nutritional supplement that could heal stiff, sore joints in under two weeks? Michael Bentley didn't think such a product was possible. In 2001, however, his father told him about a so-called "mineral miracle" that could do exactly that.

A prospector searching for gold in the Sierra Nevada had discovered the mineral northeast of California's Yosemite National Park some 30 years prior. The prospector, the story goes, happened upon a remote area with a clay-like mineral formation that sparkled in the sun. An analysis determined that the clay contained a rare and unusual combination of minerals, the product of a subterranean hot spring unique to the clay's specific corner of the Sierras. Because wildlife seemed drawn to it, the prospector extracted the mineral and fed it to his livestock. When he noticed an extra spring in their step, he began taking it himself, and eventually he shared it with others, who spoke far and wide of the hydrothermal mineral's healing properties.

"My dad, who suffers from arthritis, tried the mineral, and his arthritic symptoms went away," recalls

Michael. "He shared it with some friends on a golf course, one of whom was the late Ken Venturi, a famous broadcaster and former professional golfer. Ken had stopped playing golf because of hand injuries. After 10 days, he said he didn't feel [pain in] his hands anymore. He resumed playing golf again almost every day."

Although it had a cult following, the mineral—named SierraSil, in honour of its Sierra origins and silicate structure—had never been tested or commercialized. Michael's dad, retired Canfor CEO Peter Bentley (whose own father cofounded the forest-products company), wanted to change that. And when the mineral helped Michael treat an old running injury, he agreed to help. "I tried the product myself and was really impressed," he says. "My injury, which would always pick up after about 18 minutes of running, basically went away."

In 2003, the father-and-son team acquired the rights to the mineral and founded Vancouver-based SierraSil Mountain Minerals—now SierraSil Health—for the purpose of researching and distributing it. The former activity was, and continues to be, the company's key differentiator. "Our claim is to feel better in 14 days or less, and that's based on clinical research," says Michael, now the company's president. "There are products we compete against that claim faster results, but in my opinion the clinical research isn't persuasive."

The company doesn't disclose its financials, but Michael says its investment in research has reached nine figures in the past decade. Numerous studies across multiple populations around the world have reached similar conclusions: SierraSil is safe and fast-acting, reduces inflammation, pulls toxins out of the body, and works for the vast majority of people who try it. "Most of the mineral passes through the body, but in the process it's like a sponge, attracting and binding toxins to it," explains Michael, adding that the mineral also absorbs heavy metals such as lead and mercury and is thought to protect cartilage breakdown by suppressing the activity of genes that cause inflammation.

One of SierraSil's most significant studies to date was conducted in 2004 by the Center for Cardiovascular Sciences at Albany Medical College in Albany, New York. "The researcher, who was working under the hypothesis that SierraSil would not work, discovered a 38–43 percent reduction in WOMAC scores [used by health researchers to measure osteoarthritic pain] in four weeks—compared to 27 percent for the placebo group. That's unprecedented among joint-health supplements in our category."

Its extensive clinical research has earned SierraSil a credible reputation among health practitioners and independent health-food retailers, the latter of whom are the product's principal sales channel. Ultimately, though, it's SierraSil's reputation among consumers that has helped the company grow to its current size of 10 full-time employees—plus numerous contract manufacturers, distributors, and brokers. The product is now used by tens of thousands of Canadian customers, ranging from young professional hockey players to Olympians such as Cheryl Bernard to tradespeople to seniors looking to regain or maintain their agility and mobility.

"What's interesting about [SierraSil] from a business development and marketing perspective is it has really been driven by smaller communities," Michael says. "My speculation is that it's because people in smaller communities, particularly retirement communities, talk to each other more. They might gather at the coffee shop, for instance, and say, 'Have you noticed that Arlene's rejoined the walking club? She told me she got this great supplement at the health-food store called SierraSil. I decided to give it a try, and it actually works.'"

Among the product's early adopters were broadcasters such as Shell Busey and athletes such as Venturi, whose evangelism has further amplified SierraSil's word-of-mouth reputation. And the company's customer-centric business practices haven't hurt, either: SierraSil offers a money-back guarantee and superior customer service, the latter of which it attributes to the character of its employees.

"We have a natural product, and we see ourselves as stewards whose responsibility it is to get it into people's hands," Michael says. "Our goal as a company is to help one million people be healthier and more active. We're nowhere near that goal yet—we have a lot of work to do—but that's our joy, so we try to treat every customer well, whether they buy our product or not."



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SierraSil

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#### SierraSil Joint Formula 14

Every bottle of SierraSil Joint Formula 14 contains 90 capsules of patented SierraSil mineral powder. Taken once a day, it's guaranteed to deliver relief from joint pain in 14 days or less.

#### SierraSil Pain Relief Topical Spray

When he heard about the "mineral miracle," the patent-holder of the popular pain-relief spray O24 Pain Neutralizer wanted to make a special formulation utilizing SierraSil. The result is said to be twice as effective as the original O24 at providing instant topical relief from minor aches and pains.