

Praise for This Book

## ***Lying for Fun and Profit; the Truth about the Media***

**By Kurt Butler**

“Indispensable, entertaining, funny, fun to read, lucid..... hits with hammer force, ....a page turner, causes the reader to cringe and well with rage. This pearl of a book should be widely read.”

Wallace Sampson, MD, Professor of Medicine, Stanford University.

“.....This great book exposes the lucrative promotion of fads and frauds by the deluded and dishonest who peddle pseudoscience in the media. Butler can expect a blizzard of spewed venom from promoters of quackery.”

Victor Herbert, MD, JD, MACP, Professor of Medicine, Mount Sinai/New York University Medical Center.

Praise for another Book by Kurt Butler

## ***A Consumer’s Guide to Alternative Medicine***

***A Close Look at Homeopathy, Acupuncture, Faith-Healing and Other Unconventional Treatments***

**By Kurt Butler**

This is an encyclopedic exposé of nutrition scams, health hoaxes, and quackery in all its forms. Lays bare the myths and madness that defraud a naive public and siphon off billions of health-care dollars.

“Five stars!” – *Cooking Light*

“A great book” – *American Journal of Health Promotion*

“Excellent!” – *National Council against Health Fraud*

“Superb!” – *New England Journal of Medicine*

For more about *A Consumer’s Guide to Alternative Medicine*, click [here](#).

For information about my novel on tyranny and blowback, *Barbarians in Paradise/Terror Comes to Maui*, click [here](#).

**Lying**  
**For Fun and Profit**  
**The Truth about the Media**

by

**Kurt Butler**

*Lying for Fun and Profit: the Truth about the Media*

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## **About the Author**

Kurt Butler grew up in Hawaii and lives there now on the island of Maui. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in physiology from the University of California and a Master of Science degree in nutrition from the University of Hawaii.

For more about Kurt Butler click [here](#).

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## Introduction to E-book Edition

In America there is no legal requirement that the claims made for the thousands of pills and potions marketed in stores, in periodicals and on the internet have any scientific or factual basis. The products are not required to perform as claimed in advertisements or even to be what is claimed on the labels. The principles of consumer protection do not apply here or in any area of non-MD, “alternative” health care.

How did this happen? Practically everything we do, everything we buy and sell, from life-saving medications, to toys, vehicles, appliances, utilities, and insurance, is regulated by laws and agencies. But not nonprescription health-related services, products and “dietary supplements”, especially if they are marketed as natural, holistic or alternative.

The truth is that anyone can put anything “natural” into a bottle and market it as a cure or preventive for any ailment known to humanity, as long as it doesn’t kill people like flies. It has not always been this way, or at least not this bad. How did the current situation, a throwback to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, come about? Part of the answer has to do with the growing financial and political power of the health-fraud industries, but a major factor is that the sheep are so willing to be shorn. But why do the sheep go so enthusiastically to their sheering?

Most of the fault lies with the mainstream mass media that have been corrupted by the health fraud industries. This book is an account of the indoctrination of a generation of Americans by the corporate media that benefit from the unrestrained marketing of fraudulent health care products and services.

I wrote this book in 1999, but even publishers of greatest integrity would not publish it for fear of being sued by the quacks and the media liars that the book exposes. The publishers of quackery-promoting books are not so restrained. Because of this fear of lawsuits, bookstores and libraries have become cesspools of health misinformation. In them you can find books promoting every absurd and dangerous product and service, every miracle diet and healing system, but only rarely will you find a single book criticizing and exposing their lies.

For the last several decades print and broadcast media have favored the delusional and the fraudulent over the rational, competent and honest by at least 100 to 1 in space and time allotted, and in the clear bias of the writers and talkers. It’s no wonder that the average person’s head is filled with mush on these subjects. If

exposed to nothing but lying propaganda for decades, even the most intelligent people will end up badly misinformed.

With the advent of e-books that can be published without the help of publishers made timid by lawyers, the truth might have a fighting chance. Unfortunately, the sheer volume of health porn spread by the media has exploded to the point where a comprehensive update of the book would not be feasible. So this edition of *Lying for Fun and Profit – the Truth about the Media* is almost identical to the 1999 version. The few changes are trivial, mostly stylistic or corrections of spelling and punctuation that got by me the first time.

The facts I report are still all true and the book still accurately illustrates the mass media's methods of cynically lying for fun and profit, of choosing entertainment value and advertising dollars over truth. The postmodern journalists sacrifice their adherence to their own code of ethics, their integrity, and their professionalism in order to increase profits, even when doing so robs and endangers their audiences.

This book should be of interest to future historians who look into the spasm of irrationality our society is going through now. It sets the record straight about some of the mass media's brightest news-talk stars – celebrities such as Phil Donahue, Larry King, Bill Moyers, Leeza Gibbons, Joan Lunden, Nancy Snyderman, Sonya Friedman, and Michael Jackson (the white talk show host, not the King of Pop). These people pioneered and refined the art of lying for fun and profit while still managing to maintain an air of credibility and authority.

Most journalists seem unaware that there is a journalism code of ethics. Actually there are three, and they are all printed in the appendix. Here is a summary of the tenets they all have in common that are most relevant to this book.

The responsibilities of the journalists that come with their First Amendment rights and their access to mass media include the following:

- To seek the truth and serve the public's right to know the truth;
- To perform with intelligence, objectivity, accuracy and fairness;
- To avoid integrity-compromising secondary employment and even the appearance of conflict of interest;
- To avoid publicizing commercial claims without verification;
- To clearly distinguish news from commentary;
- To acknowledge and correct mistakes promptly;

- To encourage ethical behavior by all journalists;
- To be accountable to the public and foster open dialog with the public.

Unfortunately, every one of these tenets is routinely violated by almost all the mass media, including those with journalistic pretensions. Misinforming the public has become a way of life for thousands of communications professionals, most of whom learned their trade in colleges that are infected with the pernicious cultural virus known as postmodernism, or New Ageism. They have accepted the concept of journalistic lying as a legitimate form of entertainment, a corollary of the postmodern concept that truth is whatever is pleasing to believe.

For the [unwritten code of ethics](#) that the media really abide by click on this link that takes you to Chapter Four.

Pulitzer Prize winner Carl Bernstein said that today's journalists have lost sight of the objective of telling the truth. "Reporters are unwilling to do the hard work of reporting, and the media are turning social discourse into a sewer." He blasted the "triumph of idiot culture and sleaze in the media ... For the first time in our history the weird, stupid and coarse have become the cultural ideal in the media."

In this book we expose the cynical lying that most of the media habitually engage in. With scores of examples we document their degrading our culture by saturating it with paranoid delusions, medieval superstitions, suspicion of science, and, above all, health quackery of all kinds.

For ongoing commentary on the issues of fraudulent health products and services, media corruption and incompetence in this area, and government corruption and tyranny in service of quackery see:

[KurtButlerBlogs.blogspot.com](http://KurtButlerBlogs.blogspot.com).

and

Twitter.com. Search MauiLiberty.

## Chapter One

### Let Them Read Hogwash

We all know that the mass media lie, but most people don't understand how deeply ingrained the lying is, how institutionalized it has become. In this chapter we focus mostly on one typical newspaper, *The Maui News*, and show how stubbornly its editors and writers insist on the right to lie to their readers. All appeals to their sense of responsibility and fairness, and all pleas that they adhere to their own published advertising standards and to journalism's code of ethics, fall on deaf ears.

The paper exemplifies the tabloidization of the mainstream media over the last two decades. Scratch almost any metropolitan daily in America, except a handful of the best, and you will find a *Maui News*. We look briefly at some of them as well as popular magazines, many of which are even more inclined to lie to their readers than newspapers are.

### Dinosaurs, Werewolves and UFOs

I have before me a two-page spread from a prototypical tabloid newspaper, *The Weekly World News* (1/16/96). The story is about secret NASA photographs of dinosaurs on Mars. The article claims that a space probe (Viking 1) took photos in 1976 and that NASA kept them secret until an insider leaked them to "A leading physicist," who gave them to the paper. The photo shown (or photo-real drawing) is said to be of a herd of several hundred creatures similar to a *Bellosaurus*, but they look more like marine iguanas of the Galapagos. The article blasts the government for "the biggest cover-up of all time." The entire story was, of course, a fabrication.

The front page of another representative sample (2/2/93) of this publication screams, "Werewolf Battles Cops in Alabama!" A close-up headshot of the hairy beast in police custody takes half the page. One of seven police officers viciously bitten is shown with his head wrapped in bandages. An English professor and longtime student of the tabloids, who lives in Mobile, Alabama, where the werewolf was captured, decided to investigate. He found that the story had been entirely fabricated. The photos of the beast, the victim, and an eyewitness were all phony. The story about the werewolf's battle with police, their overturned patrol car and the capture – it was all made up, pulled from thin air. In short, it was all a lie (*Skeptical Inquirer*, Summer, 1993).

Another notorious tabloid, *The National Enquirer*, ran an article with the headline “Walter Cronkite: Why I Believe in UFOs.” It turns out Cronkite never spoke to the reporter and never expressed the views attributed to him. It was all made up, nothing but a lie. For the full story see *The Zetetic*, Fall, 1977.

On another occasion the paper ran an article titled “Top Researchers Reveal 8 Million Americans May have Been Abducted by UFOs” (11/29/94). The adjoining story is titled “How to Tell if Aliens Kidnapped You.”

One of the researchers, Ted Goertzel, pictured with the articles, was outraged. He says the paper “completely reversed the conclusions of our research.” The study actually concluded that people who claim such abductions are gullible, hysterical and suffering from false memory syndrome. Again, the article was pure fabrication, a most brazen lie. (*Skeptical Inquirer*, March, 1995)

The notorious tabloids have always specialized in selling such entertaining lies. They feed the public a steady diet of hogwash about psychics, telepathy, ghosts, vampires, werewolves, curses, fortune tellers, afterlives, UFOs, alien abductions, miracle healings, alternative medicine miracles, JFK and Elvis alive in the seventies (with photos), a woman who is bitten to death by her fur coat, and so on. Not surprisingly, most of the advertising in such publications is for paranormal products and services that bring good luck and health, foretell the future and the like. These papers simultaneously feed and exploit superstitious and paranoid belief in the paranormal, the ridiculous, and the bizarre.

### [The Maui News, A Typical Postmodern Paper](#)

It used to be that pure fabrication, that is, brazen lying, was the exclusive domain of the silly and sleazy tabloids now best represented by *The Weekly World News*. But the advent of New Age morality and foolishness puts the opportunities and tools of the tabloids into the hands of “respectable” publishers and broadcasters. For example, consider the following headlines, captions, paraphrases and short excerpts that I clipped over the last few years. These are all from substantial stories, most a half or full page in length.

- Medical Miracles from Ancient Herbs
- Aura Photography Machine Diagnoses Diseases, Nutritional Deficiencies
- Miracles of Oriental Medicine
- Ancient Chinese Feng Shui Science Brings Prosperity
- Animal Psychics Can Converse with Your Pet

- Shamanic Healing Back in Style
- Pets Reaping Benefits of New Age Medicine
- Psychics Have Inside Information
- Astronomer Says New Discoveries Validate Ancient Astrology

These are all from one paper, and it isn't a notorious tabloid. This material could be from *Any-City Gazette*, but it happens to be from *The Maui News*, the only daily on this island of about 150 thousand residents. While it is smaller than the major dailies, *The Maui News* is quite typical of contemporary metropolitan papers, which increasingly resemble the tabloids with their mix of facts and sensationalist factoids and lies.

Consider the werewolf story. The editor of *The Weekly World News* said he got it from a source he considered reliable, so he decided to "put it out there and let our readers decide." This simple, democratic-sounding expression has come to be a key justification and rationalization for the sleazy brand of pseudo-journalism now common to the mainstream media. Skeptics who protest media hogwash hear it all the time. No matter how patently preposterous, absurd and even fraudulent a story or claim is, it's okay to present it as fact and "let the audience decide."

The importance of this moral shift by the mainstream media should not be underestimated. Whereas it was once considered wrong to lie, or at least embarrassing to get caught, it is now okay to lie through your teeth, openly and with a smile on your face because, postmodern reasoning goes, no one is compelled to believe the lie. We can all say what we want, and we can all believe it or not. What could be more democratic?

Mainstream media are increasingly using this New Age logic, a basic corollary of which is the concept of "medical freedom," or "freedom of choice in health care." This clever idea is extremely important to the snake oil industries and the media, both the frankly tabloid and the purportedly responsible, because it allows them to work as partners in promoting and marketing hundreds of fraudulent "alternative medicine" products and services. It essentially exempts these industries from the consumer-protection constraints that other industries must operate under. Truth-in-advertising laws strictly apply to claims about thousands of products and services in the marketplace, but not to anything its purveyors choose to label alternative (or complementary) medicine or alternative nutrition. Paranormal products and services also enjoy this exemption.

### [The Fountain of Youth in a Tea Cup](#)

Let's look again at the dinosaurs on Mars. One would think that such a spectacular story would be the biggest of the century and would rate front-page coverage, even an entire issue. But no, the *The Weekly World News* front page story was titled, "Health Secrets Doctors Don't Want You to Know!" Five full pages of articles raved about the wonders of various supplements and herbal drugs, including a "jungle pill" from a "miracle rain forest herb that cures just about everything." Ads and ordering information for the products were conveniently included in the paper.

Now let's look at *The Maui News* of May 18, 1997. A half-page article interviewed a Maui woman and promoted her "Rejuvenation Tea," a prayer-inspired concoction of seven herbs for which she claims amazing curative and nutritive value. Entrepreneur Lynn Hollingsworth has no credentials in nutrition, medicine, pharmacology, or any other health-related field. However, the paper says, she did "throw herself into herbology," no doubt meaning that she read lots of unreliable books on the subject and thoroughly brainwashed herself. Then she prayed and a recipe came to her.

Hollingsworth markets the tea locally, nationally and internationally with therapeutic and nutritional claims on the labels and in her advertising and promotional material. She claims and implies that her product is an excellent remedy for indigestion, PMS, and ailments of the throat, lungs, and nerves. It also "soothes the process of dying," she says, so it is excellent for AIDS and cancer patients in their final days.

Perhaps most important, the cinnamon in it breaks down fat (just what emaciated last-legers need), boosts the immune system, and balances blood sugar and hormone levels. She also claims it is an excellent source of vitamins and minerals, especially iron, calcium, selenium, magnesium, manganese and vitamin A.

I repeatedly requested information supporting the claims, but she ignored me, so I sent a letter to the writer Alan Isbell and to Editor David Hoff. I said that the article promoting Lynn Hollingsworth's Rejuvenation Tea is so outrageously irresponsible that the paper should immediately run another article telling the truth. I suggested the following corrections:

- No remedy formulated on the basis of talking to God has ever been proved effective for any symptoms or disorders.
- Neither Hollingsworth's tea nor the individual ingredients in it has ever been proved safe and effective for any symptoms or disorders.
- Cinnamon has never been shown effective for breaking down fats to a significant extent.

- The small amount of lemon grass in the tea could not possibly contain significant amounts of vitamin A.
- Mullein has been studied for a variety of alleged therapeutic effects and the results have been uniformly negative.
- The term “kidney tonic” is a primitive term with no specific meaning and the herb cleavers has not been shown to have beneficial effects on the kidney.
- The combination of herbs said to be in the tea could not possibly contain significant amounts of calcium, magnesium, manganese, iron or trace minerals, as claimed in the article, the ads and the label.
- Licorice root is toxic in surprisingly small amounts. Drinking copious amounts of the tea as she advocates, can cause sodium and water retention, potassium depletion, fatigue and hypertension. It is especially hazardous to people with hypertension.
- Hollingsworth appears to be violating both state and federal law by making therapeutic claims that have no evidence to support them.
- Hollingsworth appears to be violating federal law by making nutritional claims but not providing a nutritional analysis on the label.
- Hollingsworth appears to be violating federal law by making false nutritional claims.

I emphasized the danger of overdosing on licorice and described the potentially lethal illness, known as pseudo-aldosteronism, that can result from it. In essence it mimics a tumor of the adrenal cortex. The writer and editor know that I am qualified to comment on such matters, and that Hollingsworth is not qualified to formulate pharmacological or nutritional remedies, yet they ignored me. They could have consulted medical doctors or medical texts, but they either chose not to look into it or to ignore what they learned. The paper refused to run the suggested corrections that might reduce the risk to the readers’ health and prevent their getting ripped off.

I discussed the matter with an agent of the state health department. He spoke with Hollingsworth, who proceeded to have a nutritional analysis of her product done. The results showed that all her nutritional claims are false; the tea contains insignificant amounts of vitamins and minerals. I faxed the data to Editor David Hoff and asked him to run a correction of the misleading article and ad, but he refused. The label still claims, “possible benefits: immune builder, strengthens

skeletal system, lung and throat decongestant, calming to the nerves.” Hollingsworth refuses to provide evidence to support the claims, but this doesn’t bother Hoff or state authorities.

Why would *The Maui News* brazenly ignore the simple truth and the welfare of the public? Could it be because Hollingsworth has been buying expensive advertising in the paper since a couple weeks after the interview ran? The ads cost thousands of dollars, so she must be making a tidy profit, which the paper shares in.

But wait! There’s more!

Just weeks after my stinging rebuke, as if to mock me, the paper announced that Hollingsworth would do a regular column on medicinal herbs. The very first article in the series focused on licorice root, the main and most hazardous ingredient of her Rejuvenation Tea. She listed alleged historical uses, implying that licorice is known to be effective in many serious diseases including asthma, peptic ulcers, viral hepatitis, and malaria. She also claimed the root contains large amounts of vitamin C, thiamin, Chromium and other vitamins and minerals. These are all lies, and she said nothing about the well-established hazards of licorice root. Her column would be a series of ads, fraudulently presented as articles, for her products.

The answer to the question, then, is simple. The people who run *The Maui News* brazenly lie because they are a cynical bunch and they don’t care about the truth, about professionalism, or about the welfare of their readers. Even after being alerted and informed that the product is a dangerous scam, they made a conscious decision to go into a partnership to help sell it to the public.

This might be considered a rush to harsh judgment if it were an isolated incident. However, it is only the latest in a long series of similar episodes. I briefly recount several others here. Decide for yourself whether the paper abides by the *Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics* and whether it serves or exploits its readers.

### **[A Star-Trek Type Diagnostic Device](#)**

My first dispute with the paper was in late 1993 when it ran a full-page colorful feature (11/14/93) about a wonderful Maui lady name Patricia Howard who has an amazing little device that takes Kirlian photographs. These are colorful photos made by exposing the film to an electric field rather than to light. The field is generated by an electrified plate, upon which objects (coins, leaves, insect, hands, feet) are placed. The interaction of the moisture and pressure of the object with the electric plate and field creates colorful, intriguing patterns on the adjacent exposed

film. Kirlian photography (named after its Russian inventors) is an interesting art form, and I would have applauded a photo article about the art. Ironically, Howard is an artist and if she had stayed in her own field of expertise I would not have any beef with her.

Unfortunately, hundreds of charlatans have, for almost three decades now, been employing Kirlian photography as a bogus medical device, a magical diagnostic tool that detects diseases and nutritional deficiencies often missed by conventional methods. These people never have credentials that would qualify them to perform such diagnostic services by any method, but that's okay because they are alternative practitioners. They say they are holistic and get to the root causes of diseases, while medical doctors only treat symptoms.

Patricia Howard is a good example and the article, by staff writer Laurel Murphy, is typical of postmodern media promotion of charlatans and their scams. Rather than investigating and exposing the racket, Murphy gave it a free full-page promotion, all the more valuable because it was disguised as an article. She reported that Howard has a bachelor's degree in nutrition (a lie) and gushed about her marvelous ability to detect serious systemic diseases, nutritional deficiencies and food allergies and intolerances (huge lies), Murphy also provided Howard's phone number so readers could make appointments to spend \$165 per session for the preposterous fraud.

The photo spread featured Kirlian photos of the fingers of none other than Maui Mayor Linda Lingle, who participated wholeheartedly in the promotion of the fraud. She was no innocent bystander duped into participating in the scam, but a long-time friend and ally of the New Age and alternative medicine community on Maui. She has lent the Office of the Mayor to, and involved herself deeply in, the promotion of many health scams on the island. In a letter I told her the truth about the racket and advised her to immediately disassociate herself from it. She ignored me.

It is interesting that this postmodern mayor, who was the Republican candidate for governor in 1998, is by training and profession a journalist. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from California State University at Northridge and ran a small paper on the island of Molokai for several years. In 1997 the Department of Journalism and the Alumni Association named Lingle one of its Outstanding Alumni. She represents the successful professional that young journalists aspire to be. For more on Lingle's involvement in the health fraud industry, see Chapter Four.

I sent a detailed complaint about the article to Editor David Hoff, and enclosed a copy of the *SPJ Code of Ethics*. I summarized the journalistic deficiencies of the article including the following points. The writer had:

- Failed to verify Howard's alleged degree in nutrition;
- Failed to ask for scientific evidence that establishes the Kirlian machine as an effective diagnostic tool;
- Failed to discuss the claims about nutritional assessments using the device with real nutritionists;
- Failed to discuss the claims for medical diagnosis using the device with real doctors;
- Failed to discuss with the FDA and state officials whether Howards' medical practice is legal;
- Reported in a highly biased and promotional manner, rather than objectively and skeptically;
- Assumed the truth of that which she was supposedly investigating;
- Used a headline ("Kirlian Photography Captures Life's Electromagnetic Energy Fields") that was a promotional lie;
- Involved the mayor, which increased the promotional effect;
- Promoted a scam that could harm people physically, financially, and psychologically.

Hoff replied by brushing me off with one sentence accusing me of being "narrow-minded." I then offered to do a proper investigative report on Howard's operation, to set up a test of her diagnostic abilities using people with medically confirmed diagnoses. Hoff refused. The most the paper would give me was four inches in the letters section.

Incredibly, my identification of myself as a nutritionist with a real Master of Science degree from a real university was deleted. Thus, the paper presented the lying charlatan as a real nutritionist and me as an unqualified layperson. This was a deliberate and outrageous deception and a slap in the face to the University of Hawaii, whose degrees it values less than the lies of a scam artist.

Shortly thereafter the paper published a reply to my short letter. It was a testimonial for Howard's scam by an 84-year-old woman who had clearly been

duped and swindled. She referred to Howard as a “licensed nutritionist.” The claim is fraudulent. I wrote another letter to the paper pointing out that the state of Hawaii does not license nutritionists, but Hoff refused to print it or publish a correction.

Here, then, is *The Maui News* concept of fair and objective journalism: a full page of promotional lies, four column inches of truthful dissent, and suppression of the truth about who has real credentials. And the lies got the last word.

In desperation, I complained to publisher Mary C. Sanford, who is also Chairman of the Board of Directors of Maui Land and Pine, a multi-billion dollar resort and agricultural corporation. I suspected she was just a figurehead and wouldn't get involved, but her response surprised me. She not only brushed me off, she strongly defended the article. Here is what she said about it.

“When I read the article I did not feel I was being hoodwinked in any way; I found it entertaining as is much of the Light Life section. No one was forcing me to get photographed or analyzed. We have a wide range of people with alternative life styles and thought and traditions on Maui. Laurel Murphy was not endorsing or advocating the use of Kirlian photography; she was simply reporting something interesting to many readers.”

Here again we have the key elements of postmodern pseudo-journalism, stolen from the tabloids:

- Lying about health matters is a legitimate form of entertainment;
- It's okay because it's “alternative,” which is akin to multicultural, which is sacrosanct;
- There is no such thing as fraudulent medicine, just different truths for different people;
- It's okay to trick people into buying a bogus and dangerous product or service as long as you don't force anyone.
- We just put it out there and let the audience decide;

Here is some of my reply to Sanford:

“Journalists need to understand that they have a special responsibility when reporting on health issues. The health, lives, and bank accounts of readers are at stake. Accuracy, not entertainment value, should be the primary consideration.

There are no yuks here. Either the device works as claimed or it doesn't. Either it's a great medical breakthrough or it's a fraud. It is not a proper subject for light entertainment. It is, however, an excellent subject for professional investigative journalism. Are *The Maui News* writers not capable of such work? Can they not ask simple, obvious questions to ferret but the truth?

“More importantly, why don't they care about the truth? This is perhaps the most distressing aspects of the trend typified by the article and by your attitude. You, Hoff and Murphy couldn't care less whether Howard has a valid degree in nutrition as reported in the article. And you don't care whether Kirlian photography is the equal of magnetic resonance imaging or a fraud. All you care about is selling papers. This is in gross violation of the letter the spirit of the *SPJ Code of Ethics*.”

She did not reply to this letter, but I refused to give up on the idea that there might be some intelligent life at *The Maui News*. I sent my complaint about the article to all the writers, including the fitness columnist, the recipes-for-health writer, the consumer editor, an MD columnist, and the City Editor who is a member of the Society of Professional Journalists. I asked them to join my protest so perhaps it wouldn't happen again. They ignored me.

### [Promoting Fads and Frauds](#)

Laurel Murphy, who wrote the article on Kirlian photography, returned a few weeks later with another full-page uncritical promotion of another charlatan, a self-appointed “clinical nutritionist” who goes by “Dr.” Elaine Willis. Among the gems in this article is the ludicrous claim that writer Irwin Stone discovered vitamin C. “Dr.” Stone holds an honorary degree in chiropractic and a “PhD” from Donsbach University, a notorious diploma mill for quacks. He was a fanatic and badly misinformed megavitamin C proselytizer, not a real scientist, and he had nothing to do with the discovery of vitamin C. Murphy could have learned about the real history of vitamin C from an encyclopedias or a basic nutrition or history text.

Just as she had parroted the Kirlian photographer's lying claim of having a degree in nutrition, in this article Murphy reported that Willis holds a PhD in clinical nutrition from Pepperdine University. It took me just three minutes to call the university and learn that it offers no such degree and had no record of an Elaine Willis earning a graduate degree in anything. I have repeatedly asked Willis for a clarification, but she has ignored me.

Besides lying about her qualifications, Willis dispenses a lot of silly advice about meal scheduling, supplements, food combining, and cleansing oneself of “the toxins of the universe that enter the body through the pores.” She claimed on the Cindy Paulos radio show *Talking Story* (another small-time media cesspool of

quackery promotion) that she had “started the whole live cell analysis business on Maui.”

Live cell analysis is another expensive, bogus diagnostic technique that quacks use to steal money from their clients. They charge for the phony diagnosis, then sell the poor suckers supplements and herbal drugs that they don’t need and that might harm them. The scam thrives in places like Maui, where powerful people consider health fraud a cultural right and a form of entertainment. Ignoring all my letters, *The Maui News* has continued to identify Willis as “Dr.” in short articles and notices for her lectures.

One of the paper’s writers who ignored my plea to protest the Kirlian photography and the “Dr.” Willis articles was Kitchen Correspondent Bonnie Mandoe. She dishes out large servings of nutrition advice though she has no credentials in the field and is obviously badly misinformed. In one article she said raisins should be eaten daily because they are a great source of iron; and pumpkinseeds should be eaten “to repel parasites which are rampant in Hawaii.”

I challenged her on both points. There is no need to include raisins in your diet unless you like them, since many fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans and grains contain small but significant amounts of iron. A raisin has no more iron in it than the grape it once was.

As for the pumpkinseeds, people with parasites need proper medical care, not half-baked advice from food cultists. There are very effective and safe medicines that can get rid of the parasites permanently in a day to a week, depending on the organism. Relying on purported folk remedies could be a dangerous waste of time.

Pumpkinseeds are fine foods, with generous amounts of several important nutrients and fiber. But, again, the same nutrients are available from a wide variety of wholesome foods. Pumpkinseeds are expensive, so you should include them in your diet only if you like them and can afford them. Eating them of the general principle of “repelling parasites” (presumably she meant “expelling”) because one lives in Hawaii is preposterous.

Mandoe, completely unrepentant, defended her articles with a quote from Hippocrates, “Let your food be your medicine and your medicine, food.” she appeared to have no understanding that medical science has made great advances since the days of ancient Greece. Ironically, in the very article at issue she had lamented that “It doesn’t take more than a pinch of brain power to learn basic facts about food, yet this kind of learning is not a priority in our schools.”

We should all be grateful for that! My question to her is, how much brainpower does it take to learn a little basic history, medical facts and scientific reasoning? Instead of heeding my critique of the article promoting Willis, Mandoe wrote a recipe book with a page acknowledging and thanking “Dr. Willis.”

Upon seeing this I wrote to Mandoe: “I noticed in your new recipe book that you thank ‘Dr. Elaine Willis.’ Do you think it’s fair to the public for you to call her Dr. if she has no such degree? If you cannot confirm that she has a doctorate, will you ask your publisher to delete ‘Dr.’ if the book goes to another printing? Better yet, will you delete your acknowledgement and thanks since she apparently deceived everyone, including you?”

Not surprisingly, Mandoe ignored me. She is typical of the hoards of food- and health-faddist writers now educating millions of Americans and giving them medical advice. They harbor the delusion that they qualify as experts because they have read a couple dozen irresponsible, quackery-promoting books, including some of those featured in the next chapter. That is, they have been willingly brainwashed by a tidal wave of hogwash, and unleashed by pandering publishers and pill peddlers. Such are the credentials of most of the media’s zealous promoters of alternative medicine now helping to thoroughly misinform an entire generation.

### **The Journal for the Promotion of Chinese Quackery**

In mid-1995 *The Maui News* ran yet another mindless article promoting alternative medicine. The emphasis was on acupuncture and there was the usual photo of a pincushion patient. Angry with the memory of an acquaintance recently killed by an acupuncturist, I wrote to Editor David Hoff:

“I just read your umpteenth uncritical promotion of alternative medicine in yesterday’s edition. Instead of continually running the same old claptrap, I suggest you look under your nose or, more precisely, in the hospital morgue across the street from your office, for the real story. Several months ago you ran a police-beat item about a 35-year-old man found dead in the house he rented in Makawao. A casual acquaintance of mine name Raymoon, I remember well the last time I saw him. He came to my house in a belligerent mood and picked an argument with me about alternative medicine vs. scientific medicine. The former is far superior, he repeatedly yelled at me.

“His proof? He suffered a congenital heart ailment. For many years he had taken a drug every day because a cardiologist told him he had to or he might have a heart attack. But he had read and heard wonderful things about traditional oriental medicine and decided to try it. A quackupuncturist treated him regularly for a few

weeks and pronounced him cured. Maintenance treatments would continue, but he no longer needed the medication. So he stopped taking it a few weeks before our argument. Shortly thereafter he dropped dead of a heart attack.

“The body of another victim of quackpuncture was also processed under your nose. He too was in his thirties, and would surely be alive today if he hadn’t gone to the quack. According to my medical source, the man had been in generally good health until he contracted an infection. It could have been wiped out with a dose or two of penicillin, but he chose alternative medicine instead. Why not? According to all the stories in your paper and all other media for the last twenty years, it’s a wonderful cornucopia of highly effective remedies for every ailment under the sun.

“Specifically, he chose quackupuncture, one of the most sacred of the alternative medicine sacred cows. He had never heard anyone deny its cure-all claims. Unfortunately, it is sacred but not effective. The poor sap died a horrible death from sepsis.

“Of course, I wouldn’t expect *The Maui News* to do an actual investigative piece on these deaths, since you never do real journalism. But I hope you’ll think about these young men every time you drive by the hospital to and from work. They could be your brothers or your sons. And think about them next time you run another puff piece praising the wonders of alternative medicine.”

Hoff ignored me, and shortly thereafter published an article about an animal refuge and the people who run it. Once again the paper presented a deceptive promotion of alternative medicine, this time Chinese healing as a cancer cure. Writer Alan Isbell, who was to later write the article promoting the Rejuvenation Tea discussed at the beginning of this chapter, said that a Chinese healer name Jon Young had cured caretaker Suzie of cancer, but he provided no evidence for the claim.

Not much later Hoff ran a full-page article promoting the wonders of Feng Shui, which is Chinese mysticism and superstition applied to architecture and interior design and decorating. Writer Lydee Ritchie reported on and promoted the business of one Feng Shui practitioner. For example, he had allegedly helped a local New Age bookstore double its sales by moving furniture around. And he had helped a restaurant’s business pick up by suggesting more light and color.

Most importantly, he helped writer Ritchie find her dream job by advising her to fix her leaky faucet because that is a symbol of prosperity going down the drain. We weren’t told what wonderful job miraculously materialized for Ritchie after she fixed her faucet, but my guess is telephone psychic or bull manure spreader. In any case, it is nice to know that the state can now end its unemployment problems. If instead of sending out unemployment compensation checks the state used the

money to fix everyone's leaky faucets, all the unemployed would magically find jobs.

### [Embracing the New Age Mafia](#)

I cannot recount here all the journalistic sins of *The Maui News*, but I must include the story of Liz Janes, writer for the paper (and stringer for National Public Radio), and Suzie Osborn. This requires a slight detour to the world of *Maui'ana* magazine, which can only be described as a sleazy New Age Tabloid, typical of publications now popping up all over the country like a plague of poisonous mushrooms. The little biweekly magazine is crammed with ads and articles promoting every form of quackery and health fraud available on the island and by mail order.

Reverend Suzie O., as she calls herself, was until recently publisher and writer for *Maui'ana*. No figurehead publisher, she owned the paper and called the shots. She ran ads for the likes of Princess Sharula, who claims to be 263 years old and will sell you her secret for several hundred dollars; psychic healer Dawn Christie who makes the blind see, the crippled walk, and the cancerous normal; and Gene Sage who uses bogus and illegal diagnostic gadgets to deceive his clients into buying his snake oils.

In May 1996, proving she has no more conscience than a flea, Osborn ran a full-page ad for a gang of con-artists promoting a guaranteed cure for HIV/AIDS that costs several thousand dollars. It promised to heal all participants of all symptoms of AIDS; restore immune systems to full capacity; completely and permanently eliminate the HIV from the body; make one forever immune to future infection by the virus; and teach why the medical establishment perpetuates the myth that HIV/AIDS is incurable.

When the con artists fled home to New Zealand with their booty, a flood of protests led to a microscopic *mea culpa* by Reverend Suzie O., a couple sentences buried in the middle of her long, windy, small-print column. Showing the true colors of the New Age tabloid media, she didn't offer to donate the proceeds from the ad (several hundred dollars) to the victims of the scam or to the Maui AIDS Foundation.

Even after this fiasco, for many months Osborn ran an ad for an ozone generator called Immunazone, advertised as useful for the treatment of AIDS and cancer. It costs over \$2,000. According to the Federal Trade Commission the machine is illegal in the United States and would have to be smuggled in. To be certain she knew this, I informed her in writing and even told her who to speak with at the FTC if she didn't believe me, but she kept running the ad.

Reverend Suzie O. is also the ringmaster of a monthly psychic fair that features astrologers, numerologists, mind readers, intuitive counselors, and other charlatans. Osborn and *Maui'ana* are relevant here because they illustrate the similar mindsets of the postmodern mainstream mass media and the New Age tabloid press. It appears that Osborn and Liz Janes are buddies and Janes likes to plug Osborn in her *Maui News* gossip column in a friendly, praising and promotional manner.

I wrote to Janes and pointed out that Osborn is in the business of aiding and abetting frauds that exploit sick and desperate people. Janes ignored me and shortly thereafter the paper ran her full-page photo article promoting Osborn's circus of charlatans, her psychic fair.

Janes and *The Maui News* have also run puff pieces promoting Carla "Kat" Gandy and her Kat Mandu's Holistic Advertising Agency Newsletter. The agency empowers clients with the aid of coffee ground readings, card reading, channeling through the Esoteric Cat, Cleopatra, and other psychic readings. It should come as no surprise that Gandy graduated *magna cum laude* from the University of La Verne, California, with a degree in, what else, journalism. Or that she is the executive director of the Maui Writers Guild. College departments of journalism, communications and English are churning out armies of her ilk all over the country, and they dominate the mass media.

### **Embracing Deception and Death**

After Raymoon died because he believed in traditional Chinese medicine *Maui'ana* ran an epitaph to him. It said, in part:

"Our beloved brother Raymoon left his body ... it was a joyous release ... his energy was freed, exuberant ... more than ever his wisdom supports us ... Raymoon envisioned healing centers featuring acupuncture, crystal, chiropractic, aromatherapy, (etc)... and as we walk our own paths, his vision is further realized."

The paper did not mention that quackupuncture had done him in, and made no suggestion to reconsider blind belief in everything called alternative medicine. In fact, as far as *Maui'ana* was concerned, Raymoon and all his friends were now even better off with him dead! Shades of Jim Jones and the Peoples' Temple cult.

As time goes by *The Maui News* more and more resembles *Maui'ana*. While practicing this shoddy, exploitative and sleazy pseudo-journalism the paper has consistently postured as a good corporate citizen. Hoff writes pious editorials about honesty, education, and the importance of responsible journalism. On June 15, 1994, his editorial headline proclaimed "Honesty Important, but Elusive to Find."

This is not just bad grammar. It is professional cynicism. I had just thoroughly documented the dishonesty of the paper's writers and Hoff himself regarding the Kirlian photography fraud and other issues related to health. Instead of contritely offering apologies, printing corrections, and cleaning up the paper's act, Hoff attacked the dishonesty of others, especially politicians.

One week later Hoff's editorial whined about an article in *Forbes* magazine blasting the antibusiness climate in Hawaii. He called it shoddy reporting, an embarrassment to credible journalism, and inaccurate. He referred to Journalism 101, and said, "The writer couldn't even get the simple stuff right, never mind the hard stuff." These are some of the very words I had used in protesting the irresponsible journalism of his paper. I must be getting under his skin, at least subconsciously.

### **Aiding, Abetting and Conspiring**

In each issue *The Maui News* publishes a statement of its Advertising Standards. It says, "Advertising that is deceptive or misleading is never knowingly accepted. If any reader encounters noncompliance with these standards, we ask that you inform *The Maui News*."

The paper regularly runs an ad for a "health and beauty center" which uses body wraps for weight loss. The ad says, "Leave your fat behind. Lose 4-14 permanent inches in one hour. Lose cellulite, not water." This is preposterous on the face of it, a scientific impossibility. I pointed this out to Hoff and others and invited them to discuss the issue with me and any other health professionals of their choosing. I said,

"As a professional nutritionist and writer on the subject of nutrition and medicine for many years, I can assure you that the promise made about losing huge amounts of fat permanently in a one-hour treatment is the equivalent of promising a perpetual motion machine.

"It should be obvious that anyone who could truthfully make the claim would be up for a Nobel Prize and be making headlines around the world. Would you run an ad for a magical gasoline additive that promised to quadruple your gas mileage for pennies a gallon without first consulting experts in the field or asking to see scientific proof of the claims? (In retrospect, they probably would.)

"If you doubt my opinion, please consult other experts on the subject of obesity. Now that you know the truth, should you continue to run the ad, or any similar ads, it would be in violation of your own advertising standards, which constitute a binding promise to the public. Therefore, *The Maui News* could be implicated in

any legal proceedings, criminal or civil, that may arise from the deceptive marketing of the service.

“For example, in a class action lawsuit to recover money spent on the service plus punitive damages, the paper could wind up being the deep pockets in the case.

“The FDA and the Better Business Bureau have standing offers to help the media recognize fraud in advertising. I make a similar offer and you can contact me any time for expert counsel at no charge.”

As usual, editor Hoff ignored me. Thus, *The Maui News* deliberately and knowingly perpetrates not only the fraud of miraculous fat removal by body wraps, but also the fraudulent lie of its own published advertising standards. The paper does, in fact, knowingly accept deceptive and misleading advertising, and it ignores those who accept its invitation to report noncompliance with the standards.

### [The Triumph of the Swill](#)

The casual air-headedness and cynicism exhibited by *The Maui News* is, of course, neither new nor unique. The press has a long history of promoting and profiteering from all manner of quackery, superstition and fraud. This is thoroughly documented in *Superstition and the Press* by Curtis D. MacDougall, emeritus professor of journalism at Northwestern University and an acclaimed teacher of journalism. The 600-page book documents virtually every story on the paranormal in American newspapers for most of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Included are such topics as astrology, telepathy, flying saucers, psychic healing, curses, ghosts, and prophecies. Relatively few of the hundreds of articles express any degree of skepticism while most are credulous and promotion.

Has the press promoted ignorance, gullibility, and superstition for decades? Absolutely and beyond a shadow of a doubt, it has. What is new is that the press and especially the broadcasters are now misinforming the public at an accelerating pace. There is more promotional media coverage of the paranormal and alternative medicine, and more hype, exaggeration and fabrication than ever. In the competition to capture and hold an audience, the media constantly ratchet up the sensationalism and the pandering. The business has become a competition to tell the most and the biggest lies.

MacDougall's book was published in 1983, before the peak of the millennial madness. If he were to attempt to update his documentation, he would need ten times as many pages to cover half as many years. And he deals only with mainstream newspapers run by professionals supposedly obliged to present accurate information to the public. His survey does not include magazines, books,

broadcast news, television and radio talk shows and the like, most of which are even less compelled to tell the truth than are real newspapers. The following examples illustrate the trend in postmodern print media. They show that the cynical foolishness that infects *The Maui News* is very common in the mass periodical industries.

(This book makes no attempt at the scholarly and thorough documentation that MacDougall achieved. This is muckraking commentary, and the dozens of examples of dishonest, incompetent, biased and corrupt journalism that I cite throughout are just a tiny fraction of the total.)

In 1982 *San Francisco Examiner* reporter Bill Mandel visited a psychic who recites and answers question that are apparently kept sealed in an envelope. Mandel was impressed by her performance, swears he never took his eyes off the envelope, and proclaimed “There’s no way she could be faking.” Robert Shaeffer of the Bay Area Skeptics was not impressed with Mandel’s article and, aided by magician Victor Wong, exposed the sleight-of-hand fraud in the group’s newsletter *BASIS* (August, 1983) and showed how she did it. They provided all the information to Mandel, assuming he would want to take a closer look and revise or retract his endorsement of her. But he refused to revisit the issue or acknowledge he had been had.

Another *Examiner* article (3/16/97) illustrates the smug and sophomoric ignorance and arrogance of the press. “Good for What Ails You” by David Armstrong in his “On Media” column congratulates the periodical industry for thoroughly indoctrinating the public on the wonders of alternative medicine. The *Life* magazine article discussed below is given as a prime example of the trend, which he sees as very positive. “The media,” he writes, “especially magazines, are supplying stories that once would have been *confined to leaflets in dusty corners of health food stores*” (my emphasis).

Exactly my point, Mr. Armstrong! This is a remarkable insight and unwitting confession from an in-house media commentator. The media have taken up the cause of thousands of snake oil peddlers and charlatans, and made it their own. By constantly publishing promotional claptrap and shutting out all skeptical voices, the media assure themselves middleman roles in the rapidly growing health fraud industries. I sent the *Examiner* the following Letter to the Editor.

“David Armstrong’s puff piece on media coverage of alternative medicine is maddening to health professionals familiar with the issues. For two decades now the media have uncritically and deceptively promoted unproved miracle diets and treatments with poisonous herbs, megavitamins, hormones, mystical healing

techniques, and miscellaneous snake oils. They do it because they are in the business of sensationalizing, pandering, titillating and, through advertising and media-star product endorsements, peddling bogus products and services.

“Most writers on the subject are not professionals, but lap dogs to a multi-billion-dollar industry. They don’t do serious investigative reporting, just shallow promoting. Their ilk monopolize the talk shows and other media while rationalists and real medical experts are shut out. Now that the masses have been thoroughly indoctrinated, people will fight for the right of quacks to deceive and defraud them, and as jurors they will acquit the very few ever brought to court and clearly guilty of the most egregious frauds.

“The very concept of alternative medicine is Orwellian and designed to exempt thousands of health products and services from basic anti-fraud laws that apply in all other fields of commerce. Most of the lucrative forms of alternative medicine are either experimental at best or have already been thoroughly disproved and discredited, but the media stubbornly promote them as very promising, or even proven miracle cures.

“I say alternative medicine is not a new paradigm, as claimed by its proponents (such as Deepak Chopra, who claims he can levitate and fly), but a national psychosis spread and aggravated by a Fourth Estate rotten with ignorance, arrogance and corruption. If Armstrong has the courage to debate these issues on a radio show I will come over at my expense or join in a conference call.”

I also sent a letter, with a copy of the above letter, to the *Jim Eason Show* and several other San Francisco area radio shows. I asked that they invite Armstrong to discuss the issue with me on the radio. I provided my credentials and information on my books on health care, which have been highly acclaimed by responsible experts. I also suggested they invite Michael Castleman, a long time Bay Area alternative medicine propagandist.

I closed with this paragraph: “Actually, it is highly unlikely he or other advocates will debate me. They know that the only way to keep the alternative medicine juggernaut rolling is to prevent and suppress all open, rational examination of its claims, practices and results. Please don’t play their game. Please have me on whether or not they will participate.”

Surprise! The *Examiner* did not print my letter and the radio shows did not acknowledge my letter, much less invite me to discuss my complaints. The media will not open the door even a tiny crack to any dissent on these matters because they know that the slightest ray of light could topple the house of cards. They will keep the door closed to skeptics and, like Armstrong, they will continue to

congratulate themselves for being effective tools of the fraudulent alternative medicine industries.

*The San Francisco Chronicle* (7/14/85) ran a credulous four-page feature about the “face on Mars” promoting the idea that the rock formation was made by intelligent beings of an extinct civilization. This is a huge spread even for a big newspaper like the *Chronicle*, but it lacked a single comment from or reference to dissenting experts, not even the accessible Carl Sagan who had previously debunked the claims, and not even its own David Perlman, a science writer of the highest caliber.

*The Los Angeles Times* (4/9/92) published a full-page article promoting the wonders of the latest chiropractic panacea called Network Chiropractic. Chiropractors are forever inventing new and improved manipulations to cure everything that ails you. For over a century they have claimed that mysterious spinal lesions they call subluxations commonly cause or aggravate every disease known to humanity. The lesions have never been proved to exist, much less to promote disease, but that hasn’t impeded the proliferation of manipulative cults whose only proven accomplishment has been the manipulation of billions of dollars from our pockets.

Network Chiropractic is just the latest of these. It is essentially a return to chiropractic fundamentalism but with a lighter touch on the spine instead of the usual aggressive back cracking. Its emphasis on psychological disorders, early trauma, and “clearing out,” and the emotional displays of those in treatment – the crying, laughing and yelping – give it a flavor of Scientology, Reichian therapy and faith healing. *Times* staff writer Beth Ann Krier might as well be a paid propagandist for the cult. Her article has been reproduced on heavy glossy paper and is now distributed by hundreds of Network Chiropractors.

*The Honolulu Advertiser* (4/14-17/97) ran a series promoting the wonders of traditional Hawaiian healing which allegedly has herbal cures for everything, including cancer and AIDS. The latter is a mixture of herbs, sea urchins and fish bones. An editorial by Jerry Burris praised the series with the usual obfuscations and he exposed his own confusion and ignorance. In one paragraph he referred to Hawaiian healing as “nontraditional” but three paragraphs later called it “traditional.” It has the potential, he wrote, “to bring forth an entire array of techniques and natural or herbal remedies that Western medicine has simply passed by.”

Apparently Burris does not know that scientists from the East and West, north and south, have studied tens of thousands of herbs and incorporated scores of them (or analogs inspired by them) into modern medicine. This process has been going on

for decades and it continues apace, but Burris, like most of his colleagues, hasn't a clue.

The array of amazing techniques discussed in the *Advertiser* series include massage, prayer and talk therapy. These are all very common in America and Europe but journalists consider it special when Polynesians and other minorities use them. The articles recount stories of miraculous cures without any effort to verify them.

In recent years I have provided the newspaper with reams of material concerning outrageous, lucrative and dangerous frauds perpetrated by alternative medicine practitioners in Hawaii, mostly chiropractors, naturopaths and acupuncturists. If Burris and his team really want to educate the public about health matters, one would think this might interest them. I have offered to help investigate and expose the rackets at no cost to them, but I have never received a reply. The *Advertiser*, like most papers, is not in the business of informing but of titillating and sensationalizing. And, of course, selling advertising space, including growing acreage to fringe healers of various stripes.

When the news broke about young Emily Rosa's *JAMA* article exposing therapeutic touch as hokum, the *Advertiser* reported it on the bottom of page one, ironically next to an article about 200 more job cuts by Queen's Health Care Systems (4/1/98). I sent the editor a short letter pointing out the irony of Queen's cutting needed services while continuing its non-therapeutic non-touch diagnosis, treatment and teaching programs.

My letter was not published, but shortly thereafter the editorial page carried a long hatchet job on the report that exposed the scam, five times as long as my rejected letter. Written by Hob Osterland, clinical coordinator of Queen's Hospital's therapeutic touch program, the letter attacked Rosa and her mother for their membership in the National Council Against Health Fraud, but provided no evidence to rebut the study. I faxed another very short letter defending the Rosas, the study, and the NCAHF. It was published.

A rare good article in the paper publicized a conference about encouraging girls to get involved in math and science. Unfortunately, if held up to the light a long horoscope column (without a disclaimer) is visible on the other side of the page. I am sure the irony completely escaped editor Burris. For more on the *Advertiser* and the astrology racket see below.

The *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and almost every other daily newspaper in the country periodically sends a reporter to the local China Town to do a story, with lots of cool photos, on the wonders of acupuncture, Oriental herbs and animal-part

medicines. “Here, Dear, Take Your Seahorse,” was one cute headline. They never mention the Chinese medicine holocaust that is decimating endangered species (including the seahorse) all over the world, or the many other hazards of superstitious medicine.

This paper also participates in the astrology scam and for many years has ignored my repeated suggestion that they include a disclaimer with the horoscope noting that it is for entertainment only and not based on science. In violation of their own code of ethics, they also ignore my requests for an explanation of their policy.

*The Albuquerque Journal*, New Mexico’s largest newspaper, published several articles promoting wild theories about animal mutilations. The paper criticized investigators who pointed to predators and other natural explanations and pandered to those who prefer bizarre explanations involving UFOs and government conspiracies.

*Jack Anderson*, one of the most widely read and respected syndicated journalists of the 20th Century, wrote several columns in the 1980s claiming that psychic spying is a reality and that the Soviets are outspending the U.S. by 70 to 1 on psychic research. He warned about a dangerous “psi gap” leaving the nation vulnerable. Anderson’s researcher Ron McRae wrote in the magazine *Spy* (June, 1992) that he and many other journalists lie as a matter of course in their work, and that those who don’t lie make no serious effort to confirm the truth of what their sources tell them. That is, they all either make up material or pass along what others make up.

McRae confessed that he had made a \$10 bar bet with a friend that there are no limits to the hogwash people will swallow. To prove his point he went on to fabricate stories about fantastic Pentagon psychic warfare projects. Anderson wrote about them and millions of his readers believed. For example, he reported on the “hyper-spatial howitzer that can transmit a nuclear explosion in the Nevada desert to central Moscow at the speed of thought.” This remarkable example illustrates the foolishness, gullibility, and opportunism that exists at even the highest pinnacles of the pseudo-profession of journalism, in the offices of the most respected and highly paid of their kind.

*The Associated Press*, with some 2,000 reporters and more than 10,000 print and electronic media subscribers, has long been a prolific disseminator of nonsense and pseudoscience. Every year it runs scores of stories that exaggerate and distort events in ways that promote the paranormal. When phony psychic-astrologer Jeanne Dixon (who couldn’t even cast a horoscope) died in 1997 the AP story repeated the old lie that Dixon had predicted President Kennedy’s assassination. It did not mention that Dixon had predicted he would lose the election. The article

did concede that, “not all of Dixon’s forecasts proved true,” implying that most did. In fact she was usually wrong and only occasionally guessed right. The AP manual, revised annually, has never cautioned reporters against promoting pseudoscience, hoaxes and scams. It is not surprising that the Bermuda Triangle hoax started in a feature round up by an AP writer in 1950.

*Time* magazine ran a long but shallow cover spread called “The New Age of Alternative Medicine – Why New Age Medicine is Catching On” (11/4/91). The caption to one diagram said, “Some therapies have more credibility than others.” Among the most credible, according to *Time*, are acupuncture and homeopathy for general systemic health care. While there is some evidence of marginal benefit of acupuncture for a few minor symptoms, evidence does not support claims of serious systemic benefit. *Time* erroneously categorizes homeopathy as a botanical therapy, and fails to recognize it as one of the most preposterous, delusional and fraudulent of all the fraudulent medicines. The token skepticism expressed in the article did not dampen its tremendous propaganda value to the industry.

The *Time* cover article of April 6, 1992, promoting the wonders of vitamins is an infamous example of the corruption of the media by the snake oil industries, in this case an alliance of supplement retailers and wholesalers, including the giant vitamin-and-drug maker Roche. It turns out that the source of the article was a press kit promoting a conference put together and improperly rigged and dominated by Roche. The public relations package included illegal, unproved medical claims, which were then repeated by *Time*. Vitamin expert and industry critic Victor Herbert, MD, JD, had supplied the author with important evidence regarding the very real dangers of supplemental vitamins A and C, but this information was omitted from the article.

Liberal use of the weasel words “may” and “possible,” and brief mention that some experts oppose routine vitamin popping, provided veneer of balance, but the thrust was strongly promotional and the article was a huge propaganda windfall for the industry. In fact, the National Nutritional Foods Association (NNFA) considers it one of their most powerful propaganda tools ever and sent a copy to every member of Congress and many other key government officials.

*Time* has sunk to the level of the glossy health fraud store throwaways that shamelessly deceive and defraud millions of Americans by using pseudoscience to promote hundreds of snake oils. And its motive is the same, to sell advertising space, including millions of dollars’ worth to Roche, over many years. The article came out as the supplement industry was stepping up its campaign to castrate the FDA and prevent it from enforcing truth in advertising and labeling rules. Instead of telling readers that they were about to get screwed, *Time* gave a boost to the

movement that would culminate in the greatest rollback in consumer protection in the health field in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

This was the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994, which essentially allows anyone to put anything in a pill or potion and claim that it is a remedy or prevention for any health problem. They can do this by marketing the products as dietary supplements rather than drugs. So now hundreds of substances never before considered foods or nutrients and not generally available in the diet, including some powerful systemic and psychoactive drugs and hormones, are marketed as nutrients with fantastic health benefits.

*Time* magazine is just one arm of the vast media octopus that includes *Life* magazine, Time-Life Books, Warner Books, and CNN, all of which profit directly or indirectly from promoting health misinformation and fraud. Even the best journalists can hardly retain their professionalism in these circumstances. Consider, for example, what might happen if a talented but naïve young book reviewer for *Time* were to write a scathing review of *Fit for Life*, or any of a dozen other lucrative health hoax books from Warner Books. If he persisted he would surely get his walking papers.

Or how about a producer for CNN's *Talk Back Live* booking a panel of critics of the Time-Life health hoax books? It will never happen. With this kind of power to deceive the public, truth has the same chance as the proverbial snowball in Hell. But that's not enough for *Time* which, in 1997, obtained the alternative-medicine-promoting web site "Ask Dr. Weil" for its Pathfinder Network.

*Health* magazine, also published by Time-Warner, has some great talent and has run some excellent articles in recent years. However, it has run several shallow and deceptive articles promoting fraudulent alternative medicine. Worse, it carries full-page ads for herbal drugs, royal jelly, homeopathic remedies, and the like, often with deceptive and fraudulent claims. I wrote to each of the ten or so MD members of the Board of Advisors and asked their opinions on the products and the ads. I also asked the editor about their advertising standards. Not one of them replied, but their silence told me that we will not see insightful articles, investigative reports, or scathing book reviews on fringe medicine and quackery in *Health* magazine. This is yet another publication essentially bought out by the snake oil industry.

*Redbook* magazine, a Hearst publication, is very frank about its quackery-coddling policy. I had submitted a proposal for an article titled "The Great American Diet Hoax." Editor Gini Kopecky replied, "Thanks for your submission. Personally, I'm sure your criticisms are right on the money. Unfortunately, *Redbook* would never print anything so straightforwardly critical – not a magazine that features diet in

just about every issue.” How’s that for exploitative hypocrisy? The health of its readers and the simple truth are explicitly not priorities for *Redbook*.

Of course, we already knew that from its cigarette ads and lack of articles on the dangers of smoking. In a 1995 *Redbook* article on avoiding cancer all the major cancers were mentioned except lung cancer, the one that kills more women and men than any other. A portion of the article was attributed to Sidney Winawer, MD, of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Adapted from a book he wrote, it included the following tips on preventing cancer: avoid obesity; exercise often; limit sun exposure; avoid nitrates; limit alcohol; and consume folic acid and other beneficial nutrients.

What? Nothing about smoking? How could that be? Well, it’s called spiking. Winawer’s book does emphasize smoking, but *Redbook* chose to leave that part out. Other women’s magazines that promote smoking in both ads and text or photos include *Mademoiselle*, *Elle*, *New Woman*, and *Self*.

*New York* magazine has promoted several health frauds over the years. The most significant examples are its cover articles promoting the wonders of pangamic acid and Dr. Dardik’s Superresonant Wavenergy (SRWE). The former, also fraudulently called vitamin B-15, allegedly prevents and cures cancer, heart disease, and other serious disorders. It is a worthless and dangerous carcinogenic snake oil concocted by Ernst T. Krebs, inventor of the laetrile cancer fraud.

The latter, the SRWE device, was promoted as a panacea for immune disorders. One of Dardik’s victims was investigative journalist Ellen Burstein who had read the magazine article. He told her he would cure her multiple sclerosis and demanded \$100,000 up front, which she paid. She eventually realized she had been defrauded and her complaints led to the revocation of Dardik’s medical license. This case is quite ironic because the journalistic lies were swallowed whole by an experienced journalist. Did this victimization of one of their own encourage journalists to be more ethical and honest in reporting on health issues? Not a chance.

*Country Living’s Healthy Living*, another Hearst publication, features misleading articles and ads promoting dozens of bogus alternative medicines. Acupuncture, homeopathy, Ayurveda, aromatherapy, meditation, and herbalism are all miracle medicines. There is no such thing as health fraud or snake oils, only “holistic medicines” that mean cash in the magazines’ coffers. This is health porn at its lowest. Not surprisingly, the Board of Advisors includes alternative medicine propagandist Andrew Weil, MD; homeopathy propagandist Dana Ullman; mystical psychologist Jean Houston; and voodooist Larry Dossey, MD.

*Ladies Home Journal* ran a long misleading article, “Hidden Powers of the Mind,” (August, 1994) that says many psychic wonders are being discovered and explored by eminent scientists at prestigious universities. But in reality the entire field of parapsychology research is rife with incompetence, delusion and fraud. In all the decades of its existence it has found nothing, proved nothing, and accomplished nothing. Tens of millions of dollars, much of it from taxpayers, have been wasted on a wild goose chase. Moreover, the pseudoscience provides aid and comfort to the entire fraudulent psychic industry. As long as the academics enshrine telepathy and clairvoyance as sciences, anything seems possible and the telephone psychics can thrive.

*Reader’s Digest* published a long article that uses hearsay and pseudoscience to promote the reality of psychic phenomena. *Forbes* magazine published an article about phony psychic Uri Geller, warning readers not to dismiss the possibility that he can foretell the future of financial markets. This was long after he had been thoroughly exposed and discredited as a trickster and liar. Similarly, *McCall’s*, *Women’s Day*, and many others have run articles promoting the wonders of psychic detectives. *Parade* published many full-page deceptive ads for a numerology service that exploits superstitious people.

*The Whole Earth Catalog* has also gone to the quacks. The latest edition, *The Millennium Whole Earth Catalog* carries a rave review for one of the largest and most outrageous health hoax books ever written, *Alternative Medicine, The Definitive Guide*. The review was written by Michael K. Stone, who apparently has no credentials in any health-related field and is obviously a gullible true believer.

The Preface to the catalog says, “We only review stuff we think is great ... Our obligation is accuracy to the readers.” I wrote to Editor Howard Rheingold and founder Stewart Brand and bet them \$5,000 each, with 5:1 odds in their favor, that a blue-ribbon scientific panel would judge the book to be an irresponsible, dishonest, dangerous load of claptrap.

I suggested their next catalog include entries for quackery-busting books by myself and other experts and for the newsletter of the National Council Against Health Fraud. They did not reply to the challenge or the suggestion. This edition is a major disappointment since in 1989 the catalog had published an excellent exposé volume, *The Fringes of Reason*, which lampooned UFO mania, parapsychology, crystal healing, and other New Age nonsense. Now their reasoning seems to be, if alternative energy is good, alternative medicine must also be good. This is a dangerous assumption.

**[Astro-Babble](#), the Postmodern Pabulum**

I have one last bone to pick with *The Maui News*. For several years the paper featured an astronomer named Harriet Witt-Miller, who believes in and teaches astrology. A full-page promotional article (by our old friend Laurel Murphy, who wrote the promotional features for the Kirlian photography scam and charlatan Elaine Willis) introduced her and her ideas, then Witt-Miller started writing a regular column. According to her, modern astrophysics, quantum mechanics, and chaos theory validate ancient astrology.

Witt-Miller teamed up with two Chinese medicine practitioners to create *The Celestial Time Calendar Book*, which claims that anatomy and physiology are reflections (or copies) of the cosmos, and that acupuncture points and meridians correspond to celestial patterns. They present no evidence to support this nonsense, which shows how fuzzy thinking, astrology, and alternative medicine go hand in hand.

In a sense, astrology is the prototypical alternative medicine. Astrologers have always maintained that our horoscopes are very important to our health. Cancers are said to be prone to stomach disorders; Leos to heart disease; Libras to migraine headaches; and so on. Details of the horoscope allegedly provide precise information on a person's physical and mental health. Diets, herbs, medicines, exercise, psychological counseling, marriage counseling, and even scheduling medical procedures are based on the horoscope and the current state of the heavens. None of the claims is supported by credible evidence.

Astrology is an integral part of the alternative medicine movement, though more implicitly than explicitly. The childish magical thinking that rationalizes and justifies astrology does the same for other impossibilities such as homeopathy and "energy healing." Some HMO psychologists now employ "humanistic astrology" in their counseling, though this is still somewhat hush-hush.

Decades of media promotion have created a climate conducive to the institutionalization of this idiocy, so that we will soon all be paying for it through our health insurance and taxes. This comes at the expense of responsible mental health which the media tend to marginalize. Thanks to the media, the perception is that astrology is chic, but only desperate people consult rational psychologists.

Witt-Miller claims that psychological patterns are reflections (or copies) of celestial events. Understanding this can have practical applications. "Whatever sign the sun was in at your birth shows how you shine..." And, "When mars is going through your sign, you are hot, charged, and ready to go." I offered her \$10,000 for evidence supporting these claims, but she ignored me. She promotes the fundamental lies of astrology using a veneer of science but without a scrap of

evidence. She knows there are no psychological, physiological or social data to support astrological claims, but she has joined in the multibillion-dollar industry, apparently in order to make money.

Astrology is the most important paranormal concept for the media because it has paved the way for others. Belief in astrology softens the brain and makes it less resistant to hogwash in general. There is no way astrology could be true, no process or energy that could create the effects said to exist, and there is no evidence that the alleged effects do exist. Every scientific study ever done to test its claims has refuted them and all prominent astrologers have embarrassed themselves with a lifetime of failed prophecies based on heavenly patterns.

If people can nevertheless be persuaded to believe in it, they can also be made to believe the claims of homeopathy, therapeutic touch, psychic surgery, radionics, crystal healing, flower essences, past-lives regression therapy, UFO abduction therapy, and scores of other irrational and unsubstantiated paranormal stories, products, services and theories.

Astrology is a booming business in the United States, worth billions of dollars each year. There are tens of thousands of professional astrologers in the country, some making six-figure incomes, a few even more. Almost 1500 newspapers and magazines are devoted entirely to the subject, and scores of television and radio stations dispense advice based on astrology. Telephone and computer astrology are proliferating.

Millions of people make important (and trivial) decision regarding relationships, work, travel, child rearing, investing, dieting, birth control, medical procedures, fashion, jewelry, gift-buying, cosmetics, politics, jury selection, gambling, cuisine planning, and hiring and firing based on astrological advice and considerations.

Perhaps the strongest indication that astrology is on a fantastic roll is that it is one of the very few remaining socially accepted bases for discriminating against individuals. People seeking friendship and romance through classified ads and singles magazines frequently specify the required or desirable sun signs of those they will socialize with. Moreover, hiring and promotion decisions are based on astrological considerations far more often than is generally acknowledged. State and federal laws that forbid discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, disability and gender say nothing about horoscopes.

During a time of great social abhorrence of all forms of arbitrary discrimination, the exemption granted astrology by silent acclamation illustrates the industry's remarkable power. How, as we prepare to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, does this primitive and preposterous but lucrative and influential pseudoscience escape all

critical scrutiny? Simple. The media have granted it sacred cow status because it is a cash cow for them. As we have seen with *The Maui News* and shall see with other media, they also grant sacred cow status to other frauds that make money for them. When occasionally playing journalist they only expose the frauds their industry does not profit from.

In 1975, 192 leading scientists, including 19 Nobel Prize winners, issued a lengthy statement, *Objections to Astrology*, denouncing astrology as charlatanism. The forty-page document, prepared by the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), summed up the case against the scam with illustrations and language clear and simple enough for even journalists, publishers and producers to understand.

Astrology is a pseudoscience, not the science that its practitioners and adherents claim it is. Its basic theories are impossible nonsense rooted in ancient superstition and magic from a time when essentially nothing was understood about the workings of the cosmos. Moreover, there are different astrological systems from different nations and cultures, and they contradict each other. Astrology is not only demonstrably false, it is internally inconsistent.

Astrology explains nothing, clarifies nothing, predicts nothing, and benefits no one except those paid to perpetuate its gibberish. It is of zero value in psychology, sociology, relationships, investing, and health care because the alleged influence (or correlation) of the stars and planets on personality and world events is zero.

Astrology is a business based on fantasies, delusions, logical fallacies, dogmas and lies, and as such it has a pernicious effect. To the extent that it influences us and our society it robs us of our most human feature, our rationality. In the wake of the scientists' statement CSICOP asked newspapers across the country to include a brief disclaimer with their astrology columns. The papers were asked to state that the column was presented for entertainment purposes only and there is no scientific evidence to support the predictions or advice.

### [A Corrupt Symbiosis](#)

How did the Fourth Estate respond? The media thumbed their noses at the scientists, and have been waging war against science and rationalism ever since. Even major influential papers such as *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Chicago Sun-Times*, *The New York Daily News*, and *The Village Voice* participate in the fraud. The usually sensible Dear Abby proclaimed astrology harmless while her sister Ann Landers suggested it might be valid.

After three decades of ongoing efforts, the scientists have persuaded only a handful of papers to include the disclaimer with their horoscopes, and media promotion of astrology is stronger than ever. A few years ago *TV Guide* ran a 16-page spread promoting astrology. This very generous allocation of an expensive resource symbolizes the commitment the most influential media powers in America, both print and electronic, have made to an anti-scientific and irrational perspective.

In 1985 I asked the two Honolulu dailies to start printing a disclaimer with their astrology columns. *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin* never replied and has ignored repeated requests for an explanation. *The Honolulu Advertiser*, much to my delight, started running the disclaimer. The paper ran it for more than a decade, then suddenly in 1996 it changed astrologers and dropped the disclaimer.

My many requests for an explanation have been ignored. Was it, I asked, because they had discovered evidence that astrology is true after all, and therefore the disclaimer was untrue? Then, please, share this great discovery with me. Or did they decide that the disclaimer is unnecessary because no one believes in astrology? Why, then, do surveys show that millions of people fervently believe in it, including rich and powerful people, even heads of great nations?

In violation of the SPJ *Code of Ethics*, the editor ignored me. He never told me why *The Honolulu Advertiser* had stopped running the disclaimer, but I have a theory. The new column is by Joyce Jillson. She has a lucrative astrology consulting business for which her column is a powerful promotional resource. Like most in her line of work, she presents astrology as a science. To include a disclaimer calling astrology mere entertainment and deny that it is supported by science would severely dilute the promotional value of the column, so she probably forbids it. Typically, the paper puts business before journalistic integrity and it aids and abets the deceiving and defrauding of its readers.

Here is another example of the corrupt symbiosis between the astrology industry and the media. In 1995 the New York Times Syndicate (yes, even they participate in this sleazy business) offered to provide its *Patric Walker Horoscope* column free to papers that ran little puff pieces promoting him and generating a certain minimum of calls to telephone astrology services costing one to three dollars per minute. Many participated with enthusiastic fake endorsements, including *Mirabella*, *People* and *New York Times Magazine*.

### [Life Goes New Age](#)

Scores of college newspapers run daily horoscopes columns without disclaimers. Budding writers, editors and producers, being trained in departments of journalism, communications, and English, are steeped in anti-science during their college years

and they have been learning well. The July, 1997, issue of the new, young hip *Life* magazine ran a 12-page cover story with the headline “Astrology Rising.” This propaganda bonanza for the astrology industry, worth millions of dollars by usual advertising and public relations standards, was subtitled “Why So Many of Us Now Believe the Stars Reflect the Soul.”

Written by Kenneth Miller and accompanied by colorful impressionistic photo collages with astrological themes, the article is titled “Star Struck, A Journey to the New Frontiers of the Zodiac.” It recounts Miller’s consultations with a half dozen astrologers around the country, and reveals the writer to be not just star struck but illogical, gullible, prone to childish magical thinking, unprofessional, silly and foolish. That is to say, he’s perfectly suited for a starring role in the postmodern media, especially since he holds a master’s degree in journalism from Columbia University.

The first experience with astrology that he recounts came when his marriage fell apart. He took to buying armloads of fashion magazines for their horoscopes. He says he didn’t consider himself a believer. “Still the stargazers seemed to speak to me personally.” One wonders if similar irrational behavior contributed to the breakup in the first place.

When he met a woman named Julie who he liked and he invited her for a walk in the park, he was “too full of terror to decide what to wear,” so he called Joyce Jillson’s horoscope line for his sun sign Pisces. The recorded voice said, “Today’s lucky color is tangerine,” so he put on his tangerine shirt and walked with Julie. Three years later they married. In his cross-country astrology pilgrimage for *Life* he made a point of visiting Jillson in Los Angeles because her telephone horoscope years before “had helped me snag Julie.” (If he had not had a tangerine shirt they would not have married?) This type of logic is common with postmodern pseudo-journalists.

The great astrologers at whose feet Miller groveled said to him things like, “Through 2049 your planets are in good shape;” “You have a pretty good hold on reality;” “You have some tight spots, but I think you’re going to get through them;” and “You tend to idealize women.” One astrologer, examining his horoscopes’ past, caught him rebelling in college. Another predicted “professional ascendancy with reward” by April 1998.

All this wisdom made Miller euphoric: “I arrived home giddy, overwhelmed by the readings’ torrent of insights. I was amazed at the way astrology shed light on my soul.” When I read this I was amazed and appalled at the sheer stupidity enshrined in *Life* magazine and preserved for posterity in thousands of tax-funded libraries.

Remember, the cover of this issue promises to explain “why so many of us now believe the stars reflect the soul.” The answer *Life* gave is strictly postmodern: we believe in astrology because it’s beautiful and fun to believe. That makes it true in the Brave New Dark Age.

Let me submit an alternative answer. Many people believe in astrology because, like Miller, they are superstitious and have been indoctrinated by the industry and its media lapdogs like *Life* magazine.

Months later Miller again demonstrated his foolishness and intense need to believe in the paranormal with a long article in *Life* promoting the wonders of psychic powers. The table of contents presented it this way: “BREAKING NEWS from the uncanny world of parapsychology.” Miller says that when he was ten years old he dreamed that his quadriplegic cousin drove up to the Miller home, jumped out of the car and embraced his relatives.

In the morning he was told that the boy had died. He took this as a psychic hit, just as valid as a dream that he had died would have been. This kind of logic sets the stage for the rest of the article, most of which recounts the abysmal failures of various psychics and parapsychologists. But, as he did with his dream, Miller twists the failures into successes and he remains convinced.

Mass media advertising and promotional campaigns do work, even for something as foolish as astrology. No matter how intelligent people are, if a steady drumbeat of propaganda is continued for decades and never challenged, a large percentage of the population can be made to believe anything, no matter how idiotic. A good example of this is cigarette smoking. Hundreds of millions of people around the world have been told all their lives that smoking tobacco is associated with maturity, sophistication, vigor, fun, sex and happiness. They believe it and the delusion eventually kills them.

Similarly, every American is told astrology’s lies thousands of times, and very rarely told the truth, so it is not surprising that about half of us have been convinced and millions are, in a sense, addicted to it. This is not a whimsical comparison. There are important parallels between the media’s long collaboration with the tobacco industry and silence about its sins, and their collaboration with the astrology and alternative medicine industries while remaining silent about their sins.

Most newspapers and magazines have a financial stake in promoting these three industries. A few months before *Life*’s massive promotion of astrology it ran a very similar glossy-cover story promoting alternative medicine. Both issues included

full-page cigarette ads. Like cigarettes, astrology and many alternative medicines are harmful when used as directed.

Like the astrology article, the alternative medicine article is a dozen pages of shoddy pseudo-journalism along with lots of photos of bizarre magical medicine in action. Naturally, it included the obligatory acupuncture shot, this one a full-page head of a totally bald young man with the needles arranged across his painted skull like a Mohawk haircut. We were also shown an energy healer's hands besides those of a cardiac surgery team working on a patient with his chest wide open and his heart exposed; a medical doctor holding a patient's hands and praying with her as an adjunct to the herbs he prescribes for her chronic fatigue syndrome; a nurse performing non-therapeutic non-touch on a heart patient; Dr. Andrew Weil meditating in a hot tub; and Dr. Weil covered with mud, eyes closed and herbs held to his chest.

The cover of this issue of *Life* proclaims scientific medicine and ancient folk medicine equally valid. The table of contents announced the joining of hands of Harvard MDs and homeopaths. The text by George Howe Colt is pure propaganda. Assuming the truth of what he should have been investigating, Colt uses the industry's usual buzz words and phrases that conquer by confusing traditional, Eastern, Western, alternative, natural, energy healing, and so on. Much of the piece is an undisguised gushing promotion of Dr. Andrew Weil, the Tim Leary of the alternative medicine cult.

To provide a pretense of balance, Colt throws in a few brief skeptical comments. He quotes William Jarvis, Ph.D., founder of the National Council Against Health Fraud (NCAHF): "Just because these techniques sell doesn't mean they're good. It means people are desperate and easy to deceive." This bit of ancient wisdom has never been more true. Quackery, like many other forms of theft by deception, has probably been with us since the dawn of civilization.

Jarvis simply advocates that basic consumer rights should apply in the health field at least as much as they do in other areas of commerce. But Colt, an abysmally ignorant pseudo-journalist who has probably never opened a scientific or medical journal or text in his life, belittled Dr. Jarvis, who has studied, researched, taught and reported on controversial issues in health and medicine for a quarter century. He derided Jarvis as "defensive" and suggested that he and the medical profession are afraid of alternative medicine as a threat to their abnormal love of control.

Aside from the fact that Dr. Jarvis is not a physician or part of any medical establishment, this is typical NewAgeThink. Is it not the holistic doctors and healers who want to dictate what, when and how you eat, breathe, sleep, excrete,

have sex, relax, play, pray and think? Are their followers not constantly in some kind of therapy or taking some kind of snake oil, and are they not forever seeking the next “healing experience,” no matter how miraculous they claim the last one was? Do the holistic healers not foster this neurotic obsession with health and therapy? Are they not the ones who have a vested interest in the idea that your doctor (or, preferably, your alternatoid healer) should also be your best friend, minister, psychologist, guru, fitness coach, life-style cop, supplement peddler, astrologer and mommy?

Colt also contemptuously dismisses Stephen Barrett, MD, and even misspells his name. Barrett has been the most prolific critic of the health fraud industries for almost three decades. His *The Health Robbers* is a highly-acclaimed classic and the latest edition, co-authored by Dr. Jarvis, should be in every library and home, and on the desk of every real journalist. Instead of learning something from this dedicated professional, the arrogant Colt, in typical postmodern fashion, questions Barrett’s use of the word “quackery” and even the very concept.

These two writers are separated by a hopeless chasm. There can be no reconciliation, no meeting halfway. Someday Drs. Barrett and Jarvis will be appreciated as national treasures while Colt and his ilk will be relegated to the trashcan of history in the inevitable Postmillennial Age of Reason.

### [Doing it Right](#)

Health fraud is a 50- to 100-billion-dollar industry, yet real journalism that honestly deals with fringe medicine and quackery is so rare that most people, probably even most journalists, have never seen a single example. However, a few do exist and they prove that even in today’s environment excellent investigative work in this field can be done and can be published for large audiences. The following are examples of outstanding articles that should be assigned reading in consumer education, health education and journalism classes.

Elissa Schappell and Rachel Urquhart: “Take 50 of These, Fork Over Some Cash, and Call Me in the Morning.” *Spy*, March, 1989. This is a brilliant and hilarious exposé of the fraudulent shenanigans of psychopath Stuart Berger, MD, and his cohort Robert Giller, MD.

John Protos: “Ten Things Your Chiropractor Won’t Tell You.” *Smart Money*, January, 1997. A brief but insightful look at the nutty theories and fraudulent practices so widespread in this rogue profession.

Scott Canon and Alan Bavley: "Plain Prey," *The Kansas City Star*. October 20-23, 1996. A lengthy and excellent series exposing health fraud in Middle America, and the simple folks, especially Amish and Mennonites, victimized by it.

Marlys Harris: "The Well Adjusted Child." *Woman's Day*. June 27, 1995. Exposes the rapidly growing and fraudulent field of pediatric chiropractic. Millions of children are subjected to worthless, dangerous and painful manipulations for the treatment of earaches, bed-wetting, allergies, and even cancer. Some have been severely injured and even paralyzed for life.

Timothy K. Smith: "A New Market." *Wall Street Journal*, March 18, 1993. Chiropractors take aim at children, claim spinal manipulations can cure pediatric illnesses, and they discourage vaccinations.

Jerrienne Hayslert: "Homeopathy, a Medical Controversy." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, March 1-8, 1987. This is one of the most thorough and competent investigative reports of health fraud run amok ever published in a metropolitan daily.

"Chiropractors: Healers or Quacks?" *Consumer Reports*, September, October, 1975. An excellent two-part series on Chiropractic's "80-year war on science." This classic was followed two decades later by "Chiropractors: Do They Help? Do They Harm?" in the June, 1994, issue.

For consistently excellent coverage of health fraud one must turn to less mainstream publications such as the following magazines and newsletters: *Priorities*; *Skeptic*; *Skeptical Inquirer*; *Probe*; *Nutrition Forum*; *The Scientific Review of Alternative Medicine*, and the National Council Against Health Fraud letter.

The medical profession and its press has been grossly negligent in failing to deal with chiropractic and other alternative medicine frauds, but its publications occasionally shed light on the problem. The following are rare examples.

Maria Kassberg: "How Chiropractors Are Manipulating Your Patients." *Pediatric Management*, November, 1993. Twenty million pediatric chiropractic visits each year rip off and endanger children.

Peter J. Modde, DC. "Malpractice Is an Inevitable Result of Chiropractic Philosophy and Training." *Legal Aspects of Medical Practice*, February, 1979. A disgusted chiropractor blows the whistle on his larcenous colleagues.

Mark Sanders, DC. "Take It from a Chiropractor: A Lot of Chiropractic Is A Sham." *Medical Economics*, September 17, 1990. Another chiropractor whistleblower spills the beans.

## Chapter Two

### The Hoax Book Hall of Shame

In 1978 Lippincott published the book *In His Image: The Cloning of a Man* by David M. Rorvik. It claimed that a wealthy Briton had himself successfully cloned, and that the result was a healthy identical twin young enough to be his grandson. The book was published as nonfiction, but a few years later it was declared a fraud and a hoax by a Philadelphia judge, and the publisher acknowledged it to be untrue. Nevertheless, the book has remained on nonfiction shelves in libraries and bookstores across the country.

This was an extremely unusual case, not because book publishing hoaxes and frauds are rare, but because this writer and this publisher got busted. In fact, hoax books are ubiquitous and their publication is usually protected by the First Amendment. The only reason Rorvik's book brought grief to Lippincott is because the author used the real name of the biologist whose work he alleged had led to the human cloning. The biologist sued for libel and settled for \$130,000 in damages, half from the author and half from the publisher. Had Rorvik used a pseudonym for the biologist the hoax would have been more successful and profitable.

This chapter takes a look at some of the most influential and lucrative hoax books of the last quarter century or so. Many are fraudulent in the legal sense, but I'll leave such questions to lawyers and juries. By "hoax book" I mean that a book makes so many false, misleading and deceptive claims, and is promoted with such reckless disregard for the truth, that it qualifies as a hoax in the ordinary sense of the word.

Does publication of a hoax book always involve a lie? Yes, though not necessarily by the author. Suppose an author sincerely believes the nonsense he writes and is clearly deluded and perhaps psychotic rather than cynical or criminal. The editors know or could easily learn that his claims are wildly preposterous, but they proceed with publication because it sounds like an entertaining and profitable project.

Suppose too that the author and publisher promote the book with a barrage of false and misleading claims repeated on the cover, in print ads, in broadcast spots, and by the author on his promotional tours of media land. Are the publisher and the editors not perpetrating a hoax? Is this kind of coordinated and systematic

repetition of lies in order to sell books not a hoax, and perhaps criminal fraud, in the common sense of the word?

It seems to me that the book-buying public and library-supporting taxpayers have a right to the truth about books just as they do about other commercial products that they spend money on. And rational citizens have a right to petition government agencies, i.e., thousands of libraries, to either refrain from purchasing hoax books or to label and categorize them truthfully.

We must ask whether public libraries should use public funds to aid and abet publishing health hoaxes, most of which are perpetrated by corporate giants that get fat peddling misinformation to a health-seeking populace. Most libraries do not waste money on sleazy tabloid papers, pornographic magazines, or sado-masochism manuals. It is legitimate to ask why they should waste our money on harmful health hoax books.

Hoax books are rarely exposed because there is usually no incentive for anyone but an occasional reviewer to do so. Librarians place the books according to the writers' and publishers' designations, and they almost never consider the hoax category. The task of reviewing them all is far too great for one person, so our Hall of Shame includes only a fraction of the worthy candidates. The books included are just the tip of the iceberg or, more appropriately, the most visible floating matter in the vast sewer this industry has become.

It is clear that many book publishers have adopted the tabloids' philosophy that lying is a legitimate form of entertainment and they have found it extremely profitable. They habitually publish as nonfiction books that they know or could know with the slightest diligence are hoaxes or delusions. No law and no ethical code within their industry restrains them from doing this.

Among the most common and lucrative hoax books are those promoting paranormal phenomena, UFO encounters, miracle diets, and alternative medicine. Major publishers have grossed hundreds of millions of dollars on scores of these products and paid only a few hundred thousand in settling a handful of lawsuits. This industry is a potential gold mine for class action and personal injury attorneys and private attorneys general (in states that allow them), but so far they haven't sniffed it out.

With most of the books enshrined here it will probably never be determined whether criminal conspiracy and fraud are involved. However, with the increasing number of hoax books in print, many of them promoting discredited and dangerous alternative medicines and some reeking of criminal fraud, it seems inevitable that a major publisher will be hit some day with a huge lawsuit in a personal injury or

class action case, and it will lose. There are precedents for such lawsuits and some plaintiffs have won.

The books are arranged alphabetically by author. I considered grouping the titles into several genres, such as health-related, UFO-related, and magical autobiography. However there is often no clear distinction, and ultimately they are almost all health related. Some are threats more to the physical end of the health spectrum, others more to the mental-emotional end and still others somewhere in the middle.

The growing public acceptance of the lies and delusions is distressing to those who understand the great dangers of social psychoses and are concerned about the mental health of the nation itself. If we accept lies in the market place, sooner or later we institutionalize them in law and social policy, and this is happening in America. This media-driven madness of the mobs is become a major cancer on the health care system.

Since most successful hoax books are followed by sequels most authors represented here have penned more than one eligible title. Instead of including all of them, we enshrine one or two of the most representative or successful titles and briefly mention some of the others. Keep in mind that hoax book writing is habit forming, so if an author has one title in our Hall, chances are that all or most of his or her books are hoaxes.

Our Hoax Book Hall of Shame is a work in progress, not a finished product carved in stone. As with our ratings of alternative medicine items in Chapter Five, all our conclusions are tentative and based on the best evidence we have as we go to press.

Some of the inductees are old classics that paved the way for imitators to later profit on a scale the pioneers never dreamed of. Others are unoriginal imitations and recycled junk, but are included because they have sold millions of copies. Their success has inspired hacks to write dozens of similar books, so that now in bookstores and libraries the nonfiction and health sections have become minefields of misinformation.

### **[Hoax Book Hall of Shame Authors](#)**

Here is a list of the authors whose books we have enshrined: Eliot D. Abravanel, MD and Elizabeth A. King; Paavo Airola; Robert C. Atkins, MD; James F. Balch, MD and Phyllis A. Balch; Stuart Berger, MD; Charles Berlitz; Courtney Brown; Carlos Castaneda; Deepak Chopra, MD; Col. Phillip J. Corso (Ret.) and William J. Birnes; Peter J. D'Adamo, ND with Catherine Whitney; Erich von Daniken; Adelle Davis; Harvey and Marilyn Diamond; Levon J. Dunne and John

D. Kirschmann; Bernard Gittelsohn; Uri Geller; Burton Goldberg Group; John Heinerman; Budd Hopkins; Jethro Kloss; Shirley MacLaine; Janet Macrae, RN; Judy Mazel; Ron McRae; Earl Mindell; Toshitaka Nomi and Alexander Beshner; Kristin G. Olsen; Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw; T. Lobsang Rampa; Readers Digest Editors; David M. Rorvik; Anthony Sattilaro, MD; Lendon Smith, MD; Whitley Strieber; Time-Life Editors; Ross Trattler, ND; Dana Ullman

### **Hoax Book Hall of Shame Publishers**

The following publishers are represented in this Hall: Avery Publishing Group; Back to Eden Books; Bantam Books; Beech Tree Books; Doubleday; Dutton; Future Medicine Publishing; Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich; Health Plus; Houghton Mifflin; Alfred A. Knopf; Lippincott; Macmillan; McGraw-Hill; Morrow/Hearst; New American Library; North Atlantic Books; Penguin; Prentice Hall; Putnam; Random House; Reader's Digest Books; Simon & Schuster; St. Martin's Press – Life Books; Warner Books.

One of the most distressing aspects of our Hall of Shame is that most of the books are published not by vanity presses or small crackpot publishers, but by the biggest corporations in the business. In terms of numbers of titles, copies sold and number of people deceived, the worst offenders are Warner Books, Simon & Schuster, McGraw-Hill, Time-Life Books, Bantam Books, Doubleday, and Macmillan. These publishers make millions deceiving and exploiting the public. With giants like them heavily promoting nonsense and lies, it's no wonder millions of Americans are badly and dangerously misinformed.

### **The Hoax Book Hall of Shame**

**Elliot D. Abravanel, MD and Elizabeth A. King**

***The Body Type Diet and Lifetime Nutrition Plan***

#### **Bantam Books**

Dr. Abravanel claims that everyone has a body type that is determined by one's dominant endocrine gland. He describes the pituitary, thyroid, adrenal and gonadal types and says each is associated with cravings and overeating certain kinds of foods. This is the cause of obesity, and the solution is to determine one's body and gland type, and to avoid foods that stimulate that gland. You determine your type using a long questionnaire about body appearance, food preferences, and personality traits. Then you follow the appropriate diet and exercise plans, and you drink a specific herbal tea that supposedly soothes the dominant gland and reduces cravings and hunger.

This is half-baked hypothesis and wild speculation presented as scientific fact without a scrap of evidence. You might as well base your eating habits on astrology, yet the cover calls the scheme a revolutionary lifetime plan “based on the latest scientific discoveries.” This brazen lie makes the book a hoax.

The Body Type Diet was supposed to be the ultimate diet to end all diets, but a few years later Bantam came out with *Dr. Abravanel's Anti-Craving Weight-loss Diet*. The cover promises that the diet is “based on the revolutionary 8-week Skinny School Program” and says “now there’s a revolutionary new way to lose weight and end your cravings forever.” Just as the psychic-astrology industry conveniently forgets the amazing and dead-wrong prophecies it made a year earlier, the diet hoax industry never asks what happened to last year’s revolutionary panacea diet.

**Paavo Airola**

*How to Get Well*

**Health Plus (a division of Airola, Inc.)**

Paavo Airola was a self-proclaimed naturopath, a liar (“America’s foremost nutritionist”), and a pioneer in the sleazy and very lucrative business of writing commercials for health fraud store products and disguising them as books by a real expert. This is his most comprehensive work. A sales letter for it assured store owners that each book sold would mean at least one customer who would spend about \$300 several times each year.

Airola claimed he had miracle cures for arthritis, cancer, multiple sclerosis and other serious diseases. He advocated fasting and taking enemas for many ailments and symptoms, and he prescribed dangerous mega-doses of many vitamins for a wide variety of ailments. For example, his massive doses of vitamin A (up to 150,000 Units) for psoriasis, acne, and alcoholism are worthless and very dangerous, especially during pregnancy.

Other foolish and dangerous advice from Airola includes adrenal cortical extract (ACE) for hypoglycemia; laetrile, which he fraudulently calls vitamin B-17 but which really causes cyanide poisoning, as a preventive and cure for cancer; pangamic acid, or so-called vitamin B-15, another poisonous non-vitamin, for angina, emphysema, and epilepsy; certain cactus pads for diabetes; raw skim milk and raw egg yolks for jaundice and multiple sclerosis, another dangerous prescription; Gerovital (one of the oldest fraudulent youth potion, really just procaine) for impotence and to slow aging; licorice; false unicorn and elder to slow aging; and halvah (a sesame seed, honey candy) and fertile eggs as virility foods.

This book helped usher in a new era of profitable symbiosis between the nutrition hoax book industry and the health food/snake oil peddling industry. It also gave a boost to naturopathy and other healing fads and cults. In books by imitators the number and extravagance of the claims have spiraled ever higher as the snake oil industry has enjoyed explosive growth and finally vanquished its perennial foe, the FDA.

Some of the authors who followed Airola's path, but dwarfed his mega-dosing and snake oiling, are discussed below. They include Earl Mindell, Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw, Lendon Smith, Robert Atkins, the Balches and John Kirschmann.

**Robert C. Atkins, MD**

***Dr. Atkins Diet Revolution***

**Bantam Books**

You can eat all you want including lots of heavy cream, cheeses, fatty meats, butter, bacon and such. You can eat 5,000 calories a day, be sedentary, and still lose weight, feel better and have lots of energy. In 25 years of making these fantastic claims, Atkins has never published scientific studies to support them and he provides no references to studies by others to support them.

Atkins widened his claims in *Dr. Atkins' Nutrition Breakthrough* (William Morrow), in *Dr. Atkins' Health Revolution* (Houghton and Mifflin) and on his radio show. He has promoted laetrile, high-colonic enemas; homeopathy, cytotoxic testing for food allergies, and just about every crackpot alternative medicine on the market. He claims that a machine called an Electro-Acuscope focuses healing energies and makes chiropractic adjustments hold longer. He suggests a very dangerous 200,000 International Units of vitamin A (40 times the RDA) be taken at the first sign of a cold. He says AIDS should be treated with thymus glandulars to build up the immune system.

Atkins says that mainstream medicine has made no progress in treating cancer, while alternative medicine has made a great deal of progress, which is a dangerous lie. He advocates megavitamin doses that were long ago proved to be very dangerous. Practically everything he says is an affront to rational health care and a hazard to readers. The publishers knew all this, or could have easily learned it, but chose to publish the profitable lies.

Atkins has formulated and illegally peddled supplements as remedies for serious diseases. Several of them violate the New York City AIDS consumer protection law, which forbids phony claims for immune enhancement, and several of them violate federal law against making unsubstantiated claims for dietary supplements.

Moreover, his license to practice medicine was suspended in New York for endangering the public health with his phony ozone therapy for cancer and AIDS. None of this has deterred his publishers in the least.

In *Dr. Atkins' Health Revolution* Atkins libels consumer protection groups and activists, including myself, with outrageous lies about an “orthodox hierarchy” in cahoots with the pharmaceutical industry to keep the truth about the wonders of complementary medicine from the public. It is reprehensible that a major academic publisher like Houghton-Mifflin would publish not just the dangerous pseudoscientific rubbish but also the libeling of honest health professionals trying to protect the public from quackery. My protests to the publisher fell on deaf ears, and I lack the resources to fight them in court.

**James F. Balch, MD and Phyllis A. Balch, CNC**

***Prescriptions for Nutritional Healing***

**Avery Publishing Group**

The cover of this book claims it “...blends the latest scientific research with traditional nonsurgical treatments...provides all the information needed for the average person to design his own nutrition program.” For every one of the dozens of disorders they discuss, they recommend dozens of nutrients, pseudo-nutrients and herbal drugs. They present no references to scientific studies to support any of their recommendations because in most cases there are none. At least 90% of their prescriptions are bogus and many are poisonous.

This is 300 pages of exploitative rubbish, a fact that Avery editors could have learned with a minimum of due diligence. By claiming the contents are based on the latest scientific research Avery has perpetrated a huge fraud with this book, which hundreds of health fraud stores keep in stock and prominently displayed and open for easy reference in the supplements department where it serves as a disguised advertisement for the products. Avery's specialty is health hoax books, and most of its titles are worse than unreliable.

CNC stands for Certified Nutrition Consultant, a spurious certification granted by the American Association of Nutritional Consultants, a rump organization whose founders have little or no scientific training but do have strong ties to health and nutrition fraud industries. The certification has been granted to cats, dogs, and hundreds of humans with no real qualifications in the field.

**Stuart Berger, MD**

***Dr. Berger's Immune Power Diet***

## **New American Library**

Dr. Berger wrote several health hoax books, including this huge bestseller. This truly idiotic volume claims that the immune system regulates the digestion, absorption and storage of nutrients, as well as the amount of fat we burn or retain. People are fat and sick, he says, because they binge on foods they are unknowingly allergic to and because they don't get enough vitamins and minerals.

In his practice he used a fraudulent method, cytotoxic testing, to detect the alleged offending foods. Undercover investigations revealed that almost all his patients were given the same diagnoses (chronic fatigue syndrome and candidiasis), told they were allergic to the same foods (wheat, dairy, eggs and yeast), and given the same vitamin injections and prescriptions (hundreds of dollars' worth of worthless and dangerous supplements).

Berger was a criminal quack of the first degree and probably a genuine psychopath, but his publishers, Phil Donahue, and *Parade* magazine made him "America's favorite doctor" for a decade. Between appearances on Donahue's show he wrote a health and fitness column for *Parade*. One of his books was titled *Forever Young – 20 Years Younger in 20 Weeks*.

A few years after writing it he died of a heart attack at age 40, weighing 365 pounds and apparently a cocaine addict. There have been no book recalls or apologetic press releases from his publishers, New American Library, Simon & Schuster, and Morrow, or from Phil Donahue or *Parade*. His hoax books are still in nonfiction/health sections in libraries and bookstores.

The Berger affair should have been a scandal, but the media ignored it. If they had a memory for yesterday's debacles they would think twice about their practice of worshipping media-savvy offbeat doctors, plastering their mugs everywhere, and creating personality cults around them. But, as with the psychic and astrologic soothsayers, they never look back at the long series of previous failures. They just rush headlong into the next one. See the discussion of postmodern media sacred cows in Chapter Four for more examples.

**Charles Berlitz**

***The Bermuda Triangle***

**Doubleday**

This book about mysterious disappearances of ships and planes is so full of factual errors, omissions, misleading innuendoes, technical mistakes and fabrications that critic Larry Kusche says it would take an encyclopedia to discuss them all. A real

estate salesman who operated like Berlitz, he says, would end up in jail. While ignoring information from Lloyd's of London, the Coast Guard, the National Transportation Safety Board, NASA, and other reliable sources, Berlitz makes much of anecdotes reported in the tabloids. This appears to be a case of a book writer and a publisher not just imitating the tabloids, but lifting concocted material from them. An equally preposterous hoax book by Berlitz, *Without a Trace*, was also published by Doubleday.

### **Courtney Brown**

#### ***Cosmic Voyage: A Scientific Discovery of Extraterrestrials Visiting Earth***

#### **Dutton**

Courtney Brown is a tenured associate professor of political science at Emory University in Atlanta. Through Transcendental Meditation (TM) and other training programs he became a superman with the ability to walk through walls, levitate, read minds, and travel telepathically throughout the universe and through time. Using these powers he learned that Martians are living underground on their devastated planet.

Some of the Martians have been rescued by super-humanoids called Grays and brought to earth. They now live in Martian refugee centers under Santa Fe Baldy Mountain in New Mexico. Brown has also entered the minds of Jesus, the Buddha, and other prophets, as well as the minds of some Grays.

The book is reminiscent of the classic science fiction novel *Star Maker* by Olaf Stapledon. However, it is subtitled *A Scientific Discovery of Extraterrestrials Visiting Earth* and sold as nonfiction. This makes the book a hoax. Brown is apparently sincere and has said that his career in academia is over if NASA's Martian probes do not confirm his claims. He is clearly delusional and his plight may be an example of the havoc TM can wreak on mental health.

### **Carlos Castaneda**

#### ***The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge***

#### **Simon & Schuster**

Through his relationship with Don Juan, Castaneda became heir to the magical tradition of pre-conquest Mexico. This magical autobiography and several others by him are clearly frauds. One, *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan*, was accepted as a Ph.D. thesis by the UCLA Department of Anthropology, The degree was not revoked after it became clear that the thesis was likely a hoax. The books

have been assigned reading in anthropology classes and excerpts are included in major texts.

**Deepak Chopra, MD**

*Return of the Rishi: A Doctor's Search for the Ultimate Healer*

**Houghton Mifflin**

Dr. Deepak Chopra, an American-educated Indian physician, was appointed Dhanvantari, Lord of Immortality, by his guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and has been a prolific advocate of Transcendental Meditation and Ayurvedic medicine, including the Maharishi's Ayurvedic drugs. He credits Ayurvedic physicians with paranormal diagnostic powers. They can tell a meditator from a non-meditator, diagnose illnesses, and prescribe appropriate remedies, all by feeling the pulse.

Some can even divine medicinal herbs, their uses and doses by merely gazing upon them, even if they have never been used before. And there is no limit to the miracles that herbs can perform. One called soma is so powerful that merely looking at it "creates bliss in the beholder." Now there's a solution to the drug problem. A relative of soma can cure mental retardation, he says.

Chopra tends to play down some of the more bizarre practices of Ayurveda such as attributing diseases to demons and astrological influences, and using incantations, amulets, spells, and mantras as remedies; ingesting goat feces washed with urine to treat alcoholism and indigestion; drinking milk mixed with urine for constipation; taking enemas of animal blood for hemorrhage; taking enemas of urine and peacock testicles to treat impotence; and drinking one's own urine for the prevention and cure of various maladies.

Several of Chopra's books could have been featured here, but we chose *Return of the Rishi* because it most clearly illustrates the delusional and dishonest nature of his philosophy. Anyone who doubts that Chopra has abandoned reason, science and reality itself should read Chapter 13 titled "Flyers." Chopra's flights of fantasy reach a crescendo when he says that some fifteen thousand American TMers (including himself) have learned yogic flying by applying "the science of consciousness...India's legacy to human knowledge."

He says this science "makes the work of Galileo, Newton, and Einstein pale by comparison," and asserts that "the evidence and proof are there in abundance." In fact, it is so easy for TMers that for them "flying is simply a habit."

Remove the f and the claim is true. Lying to the public is a habit for this TMer and his publisher. The flying claim alone makes the book a hoax. The editor and

publisher could have required a demonstration before proceeding. Chopra's failure to produce would have cast doubt on all of his claims, but rather than do a minimum of reality testing, they chose to participate in the hoax.

The media have given Chopra a red carpet and a free pass. *New York Times Book Review*, for example, called *Return of the Rishi* "A rich and compelling book," and Americans have spent tens of millions on his many books, tapes and seminars.

Chopra's other books include *Creating Health – Beyond Prevention, Toward Perfection* (Houghton Mifflin); and *Quantum Healing – Exploring the Frontiers of Mind/Body Medicine* (Bantam Books). All his books are dedicated to his guru, the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, "whose extraordinary insight into the nature of intelligence restructured my reality." The books provide insights into the nature of delusional thinking and madness that wears a mask of sanity.

**Col. Phillip J. Corso (Ret.) with William J. Birnes**

***The Day After Roswell***

**Simon & Schuster**

The cover promises "The truth exposed after fifty years! A former pentagon official reveals the U.S. Government's shocking UFO cover-up." This "landmark exposé, firmly grounded in fact," recounts the heroic exploits of the author who coordinated the work of exploiting the technology from the alien spaceships that crashed in Roswell. This reverse engineering project led to today's fiber optics, lasers, transistors, integrated circuit chips, microwave ovens and much more.

Along the way Corso convinced President Kennedy to go ahead with the Apollo program to land a man on the moon; ended the Cuban missile crisis; solved the Kennedy assassination; stood up to the evil CIA and its attempts to suppress the truth about ETs; and exposed Soviet agents inside the CIA. Above all, Corso saved not only his country but also the entire world by leading the development of ET weapons so we can fight back. This led to the Reagan-Gorbachev meetings and the end of the Cold War.

The book's historical inaccuracies, impossibilities, and megalomaniacal absurdities have been thoroughly exposed. For example, he claims he was in charge of Project Corona, the early spy satellite program, but does not even know that it was a CIA project. He refers to NASA's control of all satellite launchings during the 1960s and 1970s, but NASA never had control over military launchings, which were done at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. The book is a fantasia of hallucinations and delusions of grandeur, or a shameless pack of lies, or both. The publisher certainly knew or should have known this, but chose to ratchet up the

level of wretched lies about Roswell and join in the profiteering on the fiftieth anniversary of the non-event.

**Peter J. D'Adamo, ND with Catherine Whitney**

***Eat Right for Your Type: 4 Blood Types, 4 Diets***

**Putnam**

There are dozens of blood typing systems based on the genetically determined presence or absence of certain proteins in the blood. While a few statistical associations of blood types with diseases have been found, the types are generally of little clinical significance except regarding compatibility for transfusions and pregnancy. But naturopath Peter D'Adamo has taken one of these systems, the ABO system, and made it the center of the universe. In this book he claims to have discovered that an individual's ABO blood type determines: susceptibility to scores of diseases; optimum dietary intake of proteins, carbohydrates and fats; best specific foods, condiments, spices and herbal teas; ideal vitamin and mineral supplementation programs; and best exercise programs.

Your ABO type tells you what foods to eat and avoid; what medications to take and avoid; whether you should exercise or meditate for stress relief; whether you should walk, swim, play golf or play tennis for exercise; how you can avoid minor and serious diseases; how you can maintain your ideal weight; and how you can slow down the aging process.

For example, if your blood is type O you should eat meat, avoid grains, and exercise vigorously. If type A you should be a vegetarian, avoid fat, do yoga, play golf, and meditate. If type B you should eat a varied diet that includes dairy products, and engage in moderate exercise. If type AB your ideal diet is a hybrid of the diets for types A and B, and you should engage in mild exercise and relaxation techniques.

A thorough critique would take a whole chapter of this book. Here I will just point out one little hole in D'Adamo's thesis: type B ("the only blood type that does well with dairy products") is most common among Asians, most of whom are intolerant of lactose as adults and generally avoid dairy products.

The book's jacket cover says, "Here is a breakthrough book that will change the way we eat and live ... D'Adamo's extensive research and clinical testing of the blood type connection to health and disease has led to groundbreaking work with several illnesses including the treatment of breast cancer and AIDS. He has written many articles for medical journals ... and was selected Physician of the Year in 1990 by the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians." And "Dr.

D'Adamo has spent the past fifteen years researching the connections among blood type, food and disease, and his research is built on 30 years of work done by his father," also a naturopath. He is founder and editor emeritus of *The Journal of Naturopathic Medicine*.

D'Adamo makes hundreds of claims and recommendations regarding specific foods, herbs, supplements, physical activities, medicines and vaccinations. If you do not follow them, he warns, you will likely be sick and miserable. Given all the research he has supposedly done, one would expect dozens of references to scientific and medical journals to support at least a few of his many assertions. But all he gives us is a list of articles and books that mostly deal with blood groups in a general way. Very few relate even remotely to his claims, and most of these were published decades ago, some sixty or seventy years ago.

Only a handful of the articles are from this decade and five of these were written by D'Adamo. Three of these are in the journal he founded and edited, and two are in the *Townsend Letter for Doctors*, which is an alternative medicine propaganda medium, not a scientific journal. Even these articles do not support his far-reaching claims. This pathetically meager output is the culmination of 45 years of "scientific research" by him and his father.

If this were real science and D'Adamo a real scientist, he would have recognized his claims as hypotheses. Then he would have spent years testing the hypotheses, keeping careful records of his studies, and submitting the work to real scientific journals. If they were accepted and published he would then have waited for others to repeat his work and confirm his observations. Only then would he have proceeded to make recommendations to the broad public. But this is the fantasy world of naturopathy, in which half-baked ideas pass as science and become the basis for dictating every aspect of the lives of people.

The book has an "Afterword" titled "A Medical Breakthrough for the Ages" written by Joseph Pizzorno, ND. He is President of Bastyr University in Seattle, the nation's largest school of naturopathy. He says that D'Adamo is a graduate of the school's first class in 1982 and "an outstanding example of the best Bastyr has to offer." He predicts that D'Adamo's blood-type theories will change the practice of medicine for centuries to come.

Given that Bastyr is an accredited college and that the alternative medicine industry has proven its power to institutionalize hogwash by political means, I would not rule out considerable market success for the blood-type salesmen. The main impediment to this hoax being widely institutionalized is not good sense, but competition from dozens of other health hoaxes.

Here is the naturopathic concept of science, illustrated by Trattler's book, and institutionalized in naturopathic colleges and increasingly in state and federal law:

Hypothesis + Deceptive Hype = Best-selling Hoax Book + Alternative Medicine Guru Status.

On the basis of this concept naturopaths arrogantly presume to play with people's health and their lives. Their irrational prescriptions and proscriptions, and their unwarranted intrusions create neurotic obsessions, reduce the pleasures in life, and endanger those who believe them.

**Erich von Daniken**

*Chariot of the Gods?*

**Bantam Books**

Von Daniken claims that super-beings from another planet came to earth in prehistoric times. They shared their technology and building techniques with Mayans, Egyptians and others, and they may have created humans by selective breeding of pre-humans.

The Swiss author was an innkeeper with no training in science and no understanding of scientific method. His many critics who do have scientific credentials accuse him of using wild speculation, distortion, exaggeration, fabrication, omission and lies to support his hypothesis. They say he does not understand basic geology, physics, astronomy, archeology and psychology. He uses red herrings, non-sequiturs, innuendo and other logical fallacies to mislead readers and disarm skeptics.

Von Daniken is a spinner of fairy tales that he and his publishers pawn off as serious scientific theory. This is one of the most successful and lucrative hoax books of all time, having sold more than 30 million copies.

**Adelle Davis**

*Let's Get Well; Let's Eat Right to Keep Fit; Let's Have Healthy Children*

**Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich & New American Library**

Adelle Davis probably has the strongest claim to the title Founder of Mega-mania, the passionate belief that in nutrition more is always better. Whatever the problem, from preventing birth defects and having a healthy baby to raising wonderfully healthy and happy children, to living to a ripe and active old age, the solution is to eat lots of stuff you hate like liver, brain and brewer's yeast, and wash down handfuls of pills with buckets of awful-tasting milk-based concoctions.

The books qualify as hoaxes because their covers tout Davis as America's most celebrated, best-known, most highly regarded, and foremost nutrition authority. She supplies hundreds of references to medical and scientific literature that supposedly support her claims, so when she promises nutritional help for scores of health problems readers cannot be blamed if they heed her advice.

The truth is, Adelle Davis is widely regarded as a disgrace to her profession, and her references are a façade and deception. She repeatedly takes material from studies out of context and misinterprets it. Some of the authors of the studies have protested that they do not support her claims, and warned that the advice in her books is hazardous to the readers' health. The scientists whose work Davis distorted and used to deceive and exploit the public have not been able to put a dent in the multi-million-dollar publishing hoax that has continued for a half century, going strong long after her death.

Davis' books are so dense with factual errors and wild speculations presented as scientific facts that readers can safely assume most of what she says is false and much of it is dangerous. From her high-fat, high-cholesterol, high-calorie meal plans to her mega-dosing on vitamins and minerals, it's all contrary to the consensus recommendations of modern professionals. The few sensible things she says, such as advocating breast feeding, minimizing sugar consumption, and eating whole grains rather than highly refined foods, are outweighed by the harmful nonsense she preaches.

### **Harvey and Marilyn Diamond**

#### ***Fit for Life***

#### **Warner Books**

Perhaps the best-selling diet book of all time, this one made the Diamonds and Warner Books millions of dollars. For the sequel, *Living Health*, Warner paid the authors a \$1 million advance. The books are packed with utterly preposterous nonsense, much of it resembling Mazel's *Beverly Hills Diet* and some of it dangerous.

The authors boast phony doctorates, his from a diploma mill run by a high-school dropout who calls himself Professor TC Fry. This guru of "natural hygiene," whom the Diamonds adore, claim that viruses don't exist and the AIDS, polio and cancer are inventions of a government-drug-industry conspiracy to foist worthless drugs and vaccines on the public. These psychotic ideas would have hardly been noticed had Warner Books not participated in the fraud by publishing the books and

sending the authors on national publicity tours touting their bogus credentials and expertise.

The Diamonds' books have been analyzed by myself and others in great detail elsewhere. It has been very well established for at least a decade as we go to press that the books are dangerous hoaxes. Yet they are still selling well and are in libraries everywhere. They have been singled out by Victor Herbert, MD, JD, as vulnerable to lawsuits because of the dangerous nature of the misinformation they deceptively present as scientifically established, and because of the vigorous, expensive and deceitful promotion of the authors and the books by the publisher, an activity that has overwhelmed and negated the meager and routine disclaimers.

As time goes on and the media tours fade in memory, Warner's potential liability may decrease. On the other hand, the growing number of readers living by the advice for longer periods would likely increase the number of people being harmed. This increases the odds of someone eventually being seriously harmed, then making the connection and taking legal action. The books might be viewed as ticking time bombs that may someday rock Warner Books and the entire health hoax book industry to its foundations.

According to the Diamonds, eating more calories than you burn off has nothing to do with obesity. No, the vast majority of Americans are overweight because they eat foods at the wrong times and in the wrong combinations. This obstructs elimination, that is, causes constipation, which causes toxins to flood into the body, which leads to obesity. How this happens is anyone's guess. It is all absurd nonsense.

In a rare example of an attempt at fairness, Larry King let Dr. Herbert say a few words about the Diamonds and their second book. He said, "It's a quack book, full of deceptions, misinformation and fabrications, with lots of advice harmful to your health if you follow it. Children can be killed by the advice in this book. They are charismatic. They are charming. They are smiling. They are liars."

In an essay on the Diamonds' books Herbert says, "Masters of pseudoscientific double-talk and ruthless exploiters of the gullible, the Diamonds are phony health scientists, complete with sham credentials from a sham college run by a high school drop-out cult leader named TC Fry, who the State of Texas forbade in 1986 to continue calling his diploma mill a college. In 1983 the US Senate Committee on aging described such operations as schools for scoundrels, run by con artists to teach other con artists how to make a sting." Participating in this type of hoax has become a habit with Warner Books.

**Levon J. Dunne and John D. Kirschmann**

*Nutrition Almanac*

**McGraw-Hill**

The authors have no credentials in nutrition or any other health-related field, but the cover proclaims, “The best-selling guide to better eating for better health . . . millions of health-conscious individuals and nutrition professionals have turned with confidence to this book again and again for simple and sensible information about nutrition.”

The book is loaded with misinformation and preposterous advice. For example, the notorious cancer snake oil laetrile is called vitamin B-17. And pangamic acid is called a vitamin, a claim that perpetrates another scam started by the same quacks who started the laetrile scam. The herb skullcap, which has essentially no pharmacological properties and insignificant nutritional value, is called “one of the best nerve tonics ever discovered” and said to be useful in all disorders of the nervous system including epilepsy, rabies, tetanus and poisonings.

The herb comfrey is said to be a good source of nutrients and an effective remedy for many serious diseases. In fact, it has no known medicinal uses and contains liver toxins and carcinogens that render it unsuitable for internal consumption. The worthless and toxic mineral germanium is touted as a remedy for sinusitis and pneumonia.

The book contains no references to scientific studies or publications, but the bibliography includes Adelle Davis, Jethro Kloss, Bernard Jensen and other notorious quacks.

A second edition of the book names the authors as John Kirschmann and his daughter Gayla J. Kirschmann who, like her father, has no credentials in nutrition or any other health-related field. They run a consulting business called Nutrition Search in Bismarck, North Dakota.

McGraw-Hill is a leading publisher of medical textbooks and its editors have ample access to reliable information and expert consultants. They could have easily found qualified people to write a truthful book on nutrition, but chose instead to hire quackery-promoting hacks and keep real experts out of the project. It cannot plead ignorance or naiveté. This book is a hoax and a fraud.

**Bernard Gittelson**

*Biorhythm: A Personal Science*

**Warner Books**

This bestseller is based on the fabricated idea that all humans have three basic biorhythms that are the same in everyone. The physical biorhythm is 23 days long, the emotional 28 days and the intellectual 33 days. This is a preposterous idea without a scrap of scientific evidence to support it, so the title alone makes the book a hoax. The fraud is compounded by the cover blurb which promises you can forecast your good and bad days in seconds using this “established scientific discipline.” This is yet another profitable pack of lies from Warner Books.

**Uri Geller**

***Mindpower Kit***

**Penguin USA**

This kit consists of a book, a 60-minute audiocassette tape, a quartz crystal and a meditation circle poster. “Share the secret the world’s most famous psychic,” the box cover shouts. Uri Geller will personally empower your kit on the first of every month. His ability to psychically bend spoons and stop clocks and his telepathic powers have stumped the world’s top scientists. His ability to psychically divine the location of rare minerals has made him a multimillionaire. Now he wants to teach us all his talents. So we are told.

Like all so-called psychics, Uri Geller is a charlatan. James Randi thoroughly exposed his scams in his books *Flim-Flam* and *The Truth about Uri Geller*. The kit copy should read, “Share the secrets of the world’s most famous phony psychic. He has made a career of claiming to have paranormal powers that he does not possess and using conjuring tricks to convince the gullible of his powers.”

Not surprisingly, a prominent journalist, Sir David Frost, wrote the foreword. In it he said, “If you have always been interested in your psychic potential and want to know more about how to tap into what Uri Geller calls our sixth sense, this kit is the ideal starting point.” I wonder how much Frost was paid for his endorsement of the scam.

**Burton Goldberg Group**

***Alternative Medicine: The Definitive Guide***

**Future Medicine Publishing**

This is the most massive and among the most foolish tomes of the alternative medicine propaganda encyclopedia genre. It parrots the claims of the quacks without a trace of skepticism or critical thinking. The cover exclaims, “380 leading edge physicians explain their treatments.” In fact, many of the contributors

promote methods that have been thoroughly discredited, and some are notorious quacks.

The book vigorously and deceptively promotes almost every idiotic and dangerous therapy and diagnostic system now on the market, including many that have already been disproved beyond a shadow of a doubt. They include laetrile, high colonics, flower essence remedies, iridology, applied kinesiology, chiropractic manipulations for system ailments, homeopathy, and megavitamins for a wide variety of ailments.

The preface says the alternatives presented “are sound, based on science, and really work, and assures us that they can reverse the damage from a stroke and “even the symptoms of AIDS can be reversed.” Conventional medicine is superb for emergencies and trauma, we are told, but alternative medicine is better for everything else, including heart disease, cancer, arthritis, asthma, and other common diseases. These claims make the book a hoax.

Even the editors apparently harbor their doubts. To cover their butts, they added a disclaimer that admits the methods have not been investigated or approved by any government agency, that some may be illegal in some states and that pregnant women should be especially cautious in using the methods.

**John Heinerman**

*Nature's Super 7 Medicines*

**Prentice Hall**

On this book's cover is this statement: “Thanks to the incredible healing powers of Nature's Super 7 Medicines, you will never need to suffer a sick day again... These incredible rejuvenating foods are *proven* to cure scores of illnesses, prevent and reverse symptoms of aging.” The book keeps the proofs secret; there is not one reference to a scientific study supporting the fantastic claims.

The miraculous substances are antioxidant vitamin supplements (which do not occur in nature), bee stuff, cayenne pepper, garlic, onions, ginseng, turmeric, and wheat grass. He recommends vitamins A, E, and C, as well as bee honey, pollen, wax, royal jelly and propolis. So the total is actually thirteen, not seven. Perhaps Heinerman has an affinity for numerology and prefers seven to thirteen.

In any case, this is preposterous pseudoscience from an anthropologist posing as a medical expert. His ignorance and irresponsibility are epitomized by his favorable comments regarding renegade cancer clinics that operate in Mexico, just over the border and out of reach of American regulators, prosecutors and personal injury

attorneys. He claims that a poll proves that 60 percent of tens of thousands of American clients are satisfied with care they received at the clinics in Tijuana. But who did the polling? And were the patients polled after a week of pampering in a spa-like setting or months later at they took their last breaths?

The book lists five others by Heinerman published by Prentice Hall, a once-respected academic publisher. They make ludicrous promises about preventing and curing cancer, Alzheimer's, diabetes, kidney disease, paralysis, impotence, baldness, and other common and feared diseases. He is billed as "Prentice Hall's best-selling alternative health author." He would more accurately be called their best-selling health hoax author.

### **Budd Hopkins**

#### ***Intruders: The Incredible Visitations at Copley Woods***

### **Random House**

Budd Hopkins is an artist who has appointed himself a psychotherapist and made a second career of discovering and helping people who have been abducted and tormented by space aliens. His first book, *Missing Time*, from Berkeley Books, started the work of informing the world about the evil happenings, and he invited other victims to contact him with their stories. Many did and *Intruders* is the result of his subsequent investigations.

Hopkins uses hypnosis to coax dream recollections and fantasies from his subjects and convince them that they are memories of real events. Like a three-year-old with an imaginary hammer to whom everything looks like a nail, Hopkins sees alien abductions everywhere. If you have ever seen a light in the sky you could not explain, daydreamed long enough to lose track of time, had a small unexplained scratch or scar, had a weird dream involving flying, or a dream about creatures you did not recognize, you are almost certainly an abductee.

Hopkins has concluded that thousands of men and women are being abducted for purposes of medical and genetic experimentation and breeding with the aliens. He helps these poor souls remember and understand the terrible events and deal with the trauma.

The book, the book jacket, and a full-page ad for the book in the *New York Times Book Review* claim that Hopkins is objective and cogent, a skeptic and a meticulous investigator. His medical, physical and psychiatric evidence is said to be compelling and convincing to some of the most brilliant, savvy and skeptical people (unnamed) known to Random House CEO Howard Kaminsky. These claims make the book a hoax.

In reality, Hopkins is a quack of the first order, a deluded crank and opportunist who practices psychotherapy without qualifications and exploits his gullible clients. He takes people with poor self-esteem and lots of emotional problems and, under hypnosis, induces pseudo- memories that conform to his own fantasies about abduction, rape and interbreeding with UFO-nauts. He even convinces them that events they report as dreams are actually memories of real events.

Critic Philip J. Klass put it well when he labeled Hopkins the Typhoid Mary of the delusion of alien abduction, which should be called Hopkin's Syndrome. As Klass says, Hopkins is playing a dangerous game that has long-term and cruel consequences for his victims.

### **Jethro Kloss**

#### ***Back to Eden***

#### **Beneficial Books; Back to Eden Books**

This book embodies the archaic philosophy of herbalism, the dogma that God has provided remedies for all diseases – in plants and minerals. For inscrutable reasons, however, He failed to provide accurate signs and clues about uses, doses and dangers. Therefore, it's pretty much a shotgun affair in which, for any given disease, a dozen or more herbs are administered in the hope that one of them will be beneficial and the others won't kill you.

Many herbs really do have physiological effects and are potent drugs. Our understanding of them will never be complete, but it has grown enormously. In comparison, Kloss' book is downright primitive, truly the worst of the worst. For scores of symptoms, diseases and injuries, including potentially lethal dog and snake bites, he prescribes a dozen or so dangerous herbs. Like many traditional herbal texts, Kloss' prescriptions are mostly for purgatives, diuretics, diaphoretics, emetics and other eliminators. In most cases such treatments are irrational and hazardous because they lead to dehydration and depletion of vital minerals and electrolytes.

Kloss also recommends herbal mega-enemas and other primitive and dangerous procedures. For 25 years this book has been prominently displayed and sold at health fraud stores and medicinal herb shops to encourage people to diagnose and treat themselves with these drugs.

The book was originally published in 1939. The latest edition, "updated and expanded," was published in 1994. It has hardly changed in fifty-six years and, according to the publisher's preface, "all the essential original material has been retained in this revised edition."

*Back to Eden* is in this Hall of Shame because it is seriously promoted as a practical guide to the use of scores of herbal drugs as remedies for real health problems. It should be labeled as follows:

WARNING: this book is of historical interest only. Most of the remedies suggested are archaic, discredited and potentially dangerous.

**Shirley MacLaine**

***Out on a Limb***

**Bantam Books**

This is MacLaine's first book of the magical autobiography genre popularized by Carlos Castaneda. It was a huge bestseller that catapulted MacLaine to superstar status in occult circles and led to seminars where she commanded \$300,000 for a half-day's work. Best-selling sequels were *Dancing in the Light* and *It's All in the Playing*, also published by Bantam.

These books, her seminars and her talk-show appearances are full of tall tales about magical, mystical experiences and people. She discusses her powers of precognition; her ability to affect the weather by wearing certain jewelry; the theft of her purse by spiritual entities; her astral travels; and recollection of her past lives (including, of course, one as a priestess in Atlantis) with the aid of a past-life regression acupuncturist. She has never heard of a paranormal power, event, or fortune-telling system that she does not believe in.

As befits her delusional state and supreme arrogance, MacLaine pontificates with absolute certainty on scientific matters of which she is abysmally ignorant, such as quantum physics, photons, the nature of light, the nature of science, the power of crystals, evolution, the brain and consciousness, and the wonders of alternative medicine. She frequently misquotes Einstein in ways that support her claims. And, like most New Age occultists, she resorts to gibberish about vibrations and energy to explain things.

Her solipsism, self-absorption and moral relativism are traits endemic to the New Age movement. We should all focus inward because we create our own realities and are responsible for everything that happens to us. There is no such thing as evil and no such thing as a victim. This suggests that even Hitler's genocide of the Jews and Pol Pot's mass murder of Cambodians happened for a purpose. It would presumably be to teach the non-victims a lesson they can take to their next lives, but she doesn't say what that lesson might be and how the victims, especially the infants, might comprehend it.

**Janet Macrae, RN**

***Therapeutic Touch: A Practical Guide***

**Alfred A. Knopf**

Intended for health professionals and laypersons alike, this little book (less than 100 small pages) perfectly illustrates the delusional nature of so-called energy medicine and therapeutic touch. It is a how-to of hallucinations. How to imagine that you: can detect and diagnose problems with the energy fields of others (illustrations included); are a vessel or focus of healing energy; can control and transfer this energy to others and thereby hasten their recovery; can heal and deeply transform yourself with these methods.

The back cover promises that therapeutic touch is easy to learn, powerful, proved extremely effective in treating wounds and infections, and generally beneficial and healing. These claims make the book a hoax since there is no good evidence for them and the practitioners cannot even distinguish a live human from a corpse, much less diagnose and heal via purported energy fields. Macrae and other deluded zealots have spread this nonsense into hospitals and nursing colleges nationwide.

**Judy Mazel**

***The Beverly Hills Diet***

**Macmillan**

This classic of diet quackery sold millions of copies. Mazel studied drama and has no credentials or training in nutrition. The food-combining theory behind the diet is total nonsense and the diet is potentially dangerous. The basic claim is that eating foods in wrong combinations causes them to go undigested, “fester, ferment, rot and ultimately turn into fat.”

She doesn't explain how undigested foods turn into fat, but she assures us that the plan “synthesizes the work of scores of scientists, nutritionists, and doctors.” This claim is a flat-out lie, of course, and it makes the book a hoax. Macmillan, a major publisher of scientific and medical books, had more than adequate resources to quickly learn that Mazel is a charlatan and that real scientific nutritionists think her fruitcake nutrition theories are 100% nuts. And maybe they did – and published the book anyway because they had a hunch it would be profitable.

**Ron McRae**

***Mind Wars***

**St. Martin's Press**

This book is a collection of lies that reporter Ron McRae told to his boss, syndicated newspaper columnist Jack Anderson, who published them as factual insider information in his column. It's all about a Pentagon psychic task force and its psychotechtronic weapons that work via telepathy, nuclear weapons delivered by mental power, long-distance telepathic hypnosis to control foreign leaders, and psychics who keep track of Soviet submarines with the aid of a dowsing rod placed in orbit by a satellite.

The articles and book excited a number of gullible nitwits in Congress, including Charlie Rose of North Carolina, who suggested that skeptics may be investigated by Congress for attempting to hinder valuable psychic research.

Several years after the book was published McRae admitted in a *Spy* magazine article that he made it all up after making a \$10 bar bet. He was certain that there is no limit to the gullibility of the public and politicians, and the dishonesty and incompetence of journalists. He was right and his psychotic stories and variations of them have been repeated for years.

### **Earl Mindell**

#### ***Earl Mindell's Vitamin Bible***

#### **Warner Books**

This and several sequels are huge hoaxes from Warner and Mindell, who has a phony PhD in nutrition from an unaccredited and now defunct diploma mill. On this basis he calls himself "Dr. Mindell" and dispenses medical advice to millions through books and television appearances. Mindell is cofounder of the Great Earth health fraud store chain, and his books are little more than deceptive commercials for the scores of worthless and dangerous products peddled by such stores.

Warner Books has participated in his scam by publishing the books and by promoting them with lies. Here are examples of fraudulent hype from dust jackets, covers, and prefaces: An invaluable guide to choosing the vitamins that are best for you; Latest data on vitamin nutrition from America's top vitamin expert; Hundreds of proven suggestions; A trusted advisor on all questions on health and dietary supplements.

It would be hard to find a book that is denser with fabrications and misinformation than Mindell's vitamin bible, though his other books are up there. "America's top vitamin expert" lists 23 vitamins, but there are only 13. He includes as a vitamin, laetrile, the fake cancer remedy that causes cyanide poisoning.

There seems to be no limit to the unproved and discredited nostrums he hucksters for every condition imaginable. He even recommends large doses B vitamins as an antidote to habitual lying by children (might there be a supplement to cure his habitual lying?) and, of course, there is not a single reference to a scientific study to support the recommendations.

A clever part of Mindell's hoax is to thank, in his "Acknowledgments," the AMA, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Dietetic Association, the National Academy of Sciences, nutritionist James Kenny, PhD, and others who have credibility. He thanks them for "assisting in the preparation of the book." Given a chance every one of these would vociferously denounce the book and some have.

Warner Books editors could have very easily learned that Mindell is a pill-peddling charlatan, and that his ideas are totally unsupportable. But they chose to go for the gold that big lies can generate. Now the books can be found not just in bookstores and libraries but also in health fraud stores, supermarkets, pharmacies and anywhere else that supplements and herbal drugs are peddled. Millions of Americans are wasting their money and risking their health because of this massive fraud perpetrated by Mindell and Warner Books.

Mindell's latest hoax book, *Earl Mindell's Supplement Bible* from Simon & Schuster touts "hundreds of new products that will help you live longer, look better, stay healthier, improve strength and sexual vitality, burn fat, think better, and much more with cutting edge supplements." So now in this Golden Age of Supplement Miracles we have to buy and take not just the hundreds of miracle pills he told us about in previous books, but hundreds more.

**Toshitaka Nomi and Alexander Beshar**

***You are your Blood Type***

**Simon & Schuster**

According to the cover of this book you are more than your numerology chart, your handwriting, your birth sign and your daily horoscope. You are your blood type. "It's a revolutionary breakthrough in personality analysis! Discover how you can find success in love, career, family, money – every area of life!"

If you have type O blood you are aggressive and realistic. If type A you are industrious, detail-oriented and peace loving. If type B you are creative and individualistic. And if type AB you are rational but moody. So claim the teasers on the cover.

Now “you can use this exciting information to unlock the secrets of your inner self, improve your relations with others, and much more!” Choose the career that’s best for you. Choose a mate you will be compatible with. Understand and get along with people better. Find health, wealth and happiness.

Long lists of the qualities and weaknesses of people with the different blood types are provided. For example, type O confers these qualities (and weaknesses): clear-sighted (does not value opinions of others); good estimator of social relations (status seeker); very sexy (obsessive lover); eloquent (can’t shut up); and so on.

As in astrology, the qualities discussed generally apply to everyone in varying degrees and are difficult to quantify. The authors claim that the conclusions are based on surveys of more than 100,000 people, but there are no references to the studies and no discussion of their methodology and precise results. Apparently they have not been deemed acceptable for publication in any reputable journals of psychology, sociology or anthropology.

While conceding the value of astrology, numerology and graphology, the authors assure us that blood type is much more important. They encourage us to do what millions of Japanese do and rigorously incorporate the concepts into our lives and those we affect such as our lovers, friends, fellow workers, and employees. It is important to know that those with type A blood make good accountants and farmers, for example, but poor investment brokers and football players. Type Bs make good cooks and journalists, but poor doctors and diplomats. Type ABs make good teachers and attorneys, but poor soldiers and pilots.

Thus, the authors encourage career selection and, more ominously, irrational bias against individuals in college, job training and the workplace based on these unproven concepts. Of course, voters should know that some types make good legislators and others do not. This type of discrimination, reminiscent of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, is apparently perfectly legal and very widespread in Japan. Examples are given of corporations seeking executives with specific blood types. Perhaps most disturbing, one type is said to be more likely to commit arson, another to be a traitor, another to be a murdered and so on.

All this is especially repugnant to democratic and fair-minded Americans because, unlike astrology and other superstitions, blood type pigeonholing is based on genetics and therefore has the potential for creating a permanent caste system. This book is not only preposterous; it is pernicious.

**Kristin G Olsen**

***The Encyclopedia of Alternative Health Care***

## **Simon & Schuster**

Though not a bestseller and quite modest in scope, this book is important because it was one of the first of the alternative medicine encyclopedia genre by a major publisher, and because it illustrates the gullibility and psychopathology of the devotees and promoters of the fad. The genre culminated in the Goldberg Group's book (above in this chapter), which holds as much manure as will fit in a volume that can be carried by one person.

Don't look for scholarship, careful investigation or insight here. The book reads like a collection of health fraud store flyers promoting iridology, homeopathy, polarity therapy, pseudo-nutrition, herbalism, high colonics and dozens of irrational and silly practices.

A product of hypochondria and health cultism, the book is at once hilarious and pathetic. Here is a woman who spends her life sampling the scores of quack nostrums now in vogue, much as a food critic goes from restaurant to restaurant sampling the fare. But while the connoisseur of food and wine is a hedonist and a skeptic, Olsen's quest is masochistic, submissive and credulous.

She submits to poking, prodding, needling, spine cracking, enemas, and brainwashing, and proclaims them all wonderful. She even uses the term "guinea pig" to describe herself. Everything she tries makes her better, yet she remains unwell enough to continue seeking treatment. And the irony completely escapes her.

Olsen recommends mega-enemas for everything and admits to getting a powerful and peculiar high from them. She describes "a tremendous release of impacted material" and "a sudden release of energy that had literally been captured in my intestines all that time. I shook as the energy was released and cried the tears I had not allowed myself to show."

Her love affair with enemas is especially interesting in light of the fact that her book ignores one of the few "alternative medicines" for which there is some evidence of efficacy. This is normal sexual activity, which has been shown helpful in some cases of arthritis, migraine headaches and other aches and pains.

Olsen is no more a health expert or responsible health journalist than a junkie in an alley, shooting up garbage she bought from some creep, is a pharmacologist.

## **Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw**

### ***Life Extension: A Practical Scientific Approach***

## **Warner Books**

This book is neither practical nor scientific and its authors are not the experts that publisher Warner Books makes them out to be. It's not practical because the supplements and drugs they recommend cost tens of thousands of dollars a year and it's not scientific because there is no evidence to support their recommendations. Pearson has an undergraduate degree in physics, Shaw has one in chemistry, neither has a graduate degree in anything and neither is an expert on aging. Moreover, the regimen of dozens of pills each day includes toxic levels of several vitamins and daily doses of dangerous drugs and hormones.

Like Mindell, the authors have a vested interest in the products they recommend: they license their formula to pill peddlers who pay them royalties for the use of their names. Pearson and Shaw denigrate exercise and claim that all its benefits can be had by taking the pills and remaining sedentary. Many experts believe that following their advice is more likely to accelerate aging rather than retard it. This is because the so-called antioxidants in their regimen are actually redox agents that act as pro-oxidants when taken in the doses the authors recommend, and because exercise is the best proven anti-aging tool available to us.

The book is a hoax and a fraud, but this not has prevented it from making Warner Books and the authors millions of dollars.

## **T. Lobsang Rampa**

### ***The Third Eye (and 18 sequels)***

#### **Ballantine and Doubleday**

This book and its sequels are supposedly autobiographical accounts by Rampa of his wondrous childhood in Tibet that included amazing paranormal events and experiences. The most far-out claim is about brain surgery, performed when he was eight by Tibetan Lamas. It opened his third eye and thereby unlocked his psychic powers such as telepathy and aura reading for instant character analysis and disease diagnosis. He could also levitate, astral travel, make himself invisible, recall his past lives, and much more.

However, it turns out that Rampa is really Cyril H. Hoskins of London, who had never been to Tibet. Like a good tabloid reporter, he simply spun fantastic yarns and passed them off as fact. The lies have clearly been very lucrative. Millions of copies of the books have been sold, thirteen titles are still in print, and the books are still in nonfiction sections of bookstores and libraries everywhere.

Forty years after the hoax was exposed its American perpetrator Doubleday has never admitted or apologized for it. Nor have they put a fiction label on the books. A spokesman for Random House commented, “We expected that people would think it good reading, but not necessarily true.” This sounds a lot like, “We put it out there and let our readers decide,” which was the *Weekly World News* editor’s rationalization for the fabricated werewolf story in Chapter One.

**Readers Digest Editors**

***Family Guide to Natural Medicine***

**Reader’s Digest Books**

This book is in the tradition of Airola, Mindell, Balch, and Goldberg. It is a more colorful promotional encyclopedia of mostly fraudulent alternative medicines presented as general family health care. Iridology, Ayurveda, megavitamins, homeopathy, and all the usual holistic hogwash is included.

This is a handsome volume with 416 pretty pages full of lying propaganda, not a single scientific reference and almost no input from rational medical doctors. Like the Goldberg book, it promotes dozens of unproven and thoroughly discredited methods as if there has never been any doubt about their efficacy. Not surprisingly, ubiquitous quackophile Andrew Weil is listed as Chief Consultant.

**David M. Rorvik**

***In His Own Image: The Cloning of a Man***

**Lippincott**

This is the “true story” about a man who had a clone of himself made. Not a word of it is true. It is all made up, the very essence of a fraud. The book is discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

**Anthony Sattilaro, MD**

***Living Well Naturally***

**Houghton Mifflin**

In this bestseller Sattilaro claims that a macrobiotic diet cured his prostate cancer and saved his life. The publisher sent him on national publicity tours and he appeared on dozens of talk shows, in newspapers and in magazines. He died from prostate cancer a few years after publication.

Houghton Mifflin did not recall the books, hold a press conference to issue a warning, or have warning stickers affixed to the books. They did not help in any

way to inform the public that he had died of the cancer that the book claims he had been cured of. There were no newspaper articles, news items or talk show discussions about his death and most readers are unaware he has died. Bookstores and libraries all over the country still carry his books in their nonfiction sections.

The cover blurb for Sattilaro's bestseller *Recalled by Life* (Avon) says, "Here is the inspirational true story of his complete recovery." Like Houghton Mifflin, Avon has done nothing to inform the public of the truth subsequent to his death.

**Lendon Smith, MD**

***Feed Yourself Right***

**McGraw-Hill**

In this book and several others Dr. Smith asserts that for every symptom, disease, or stressful situation there is a specific combination of supplements that will relieve the problem. From life threatening and crippling disorders to minor blemishes he has the solutions in a handful of pills. He even has specific vitamins and minerals for dozens of occupations such as cab driver, actor, musician, doctor, housewife, and so on. Are you going to a dentist, taking a test, or visiting the in-laws? Dr. Smith has just the pills for you. But most of his books are aimed at children. If you have a misbehaving child, he has a series of painful vitamin injections that will set the brat straight.

Besides encouraging people to poison themselves and their kids with toxic doses of supplements, he recommends raw milk, avoiding foods you are allergic to because they cause obesity, diagnosis by hair analysis and cytotoxic testing, taking thyroxin pills, taking glandulars, fasting to the point of feeling weak and sick, and lots of other nonsense.

Smith's books are hoaxes because there is not a scrap of scientific evidence to support his claims, but they are heavily promoted by this publisher of medical and other academic texts as reliable sources of vital health information. McGraw-Hill labels him America's best-loved physician, noted pediatrician, and most recognizable children's doctor in the nation, and calls his books classics in the child-care field. In reality they are dangerous health hoax books.

In 1973 the Oregon Board of Medical Examiners revoked Smith's narcotics license and put him on probation for ten years for improper drug prescribing. He was forbidden to prescribe drugs known to often be abused, and limited to pediatric practice, but got into more trouble for overprescribing Ritalin. He then allied himself with the health fraud industry. In 1987 he surrendered his medical license

rather than face charges of fraud apparently stemming from his dangerous practice of signing authorizations for insurance payments for patients he had not seen.

Contrary to the lying hype of McGraw-Hill and the many talk-show hosts who helped make him rich and famous, Lendon Smith is a quack and his books are dangerous frauds that the publisher should withdraw from circulation out of simple decency.

### **Whitley Strieber**

#### ***Communion: A True Story***

#### **Beech Tree Books, Morrow/Hearst Corporation**

Whitley Strieber is a fantasy-prone science fiction writer with a long history of terrifying nightmares. He is also an admitted habitual liar, having lied about being harassed and menaced by an old friend, being present and almost killed during Charles Whitman's sniper attack from the tower at the University of Texas, having his house burn down when he was a child, and numerous other incidents.

For many years Strieber had a childish habit of searching for goblins in closets and under beds. He has dabbled in witchcraft, Christian and Zen mysticism, and Gurdjieff's mysticism. Two of his novels dealt with the invasion of Earth by space aliens. Two other novels, *The Wolfen* and *The Hunger*, were made into movies that were moderately successful.

Strieber hit the jackpot with *Communion: A True Story*, for which he was paid a \$1-million advance. His bright idea was to label this sci-fi novel nonfiction, to hoax people inclined to believe such things. It is a ludicrous tale about being abducted, taken aboard a UFO, raped, sodomized, and having a needle inserted into his brain by semi-divine UFO-nauts. The abduction by a small battalion of aliens occurred in spite of locked doors and an elaborate burglar alarm system, and without waking his wife who slept by his side.

Much of Strieber's personality, his history and the events he bears witness to are consistent with temporal lobe epilepsy. Any honest, rational, responsible publisher would recognize the tale as a hallucination, a fantasy or a lie, but Morrow published it as a true story and vigorously promoted it as such. The bottom margins of every other page labels it "a true story." And Morrow promotions for the sequel, *Transformation*, claim that senior editor Bruce Lee saw two of the visitors in a bookstore, wearing sunglasses and leafing through the book.

*Communion* was a bestseller for many months and is one of the most lucrative hoax books ever written. It represents the epitome of the sleazy business of

publishing lies for fun and profit. The movie, though, was a flop. Another sequel, actually a prequel, *The Secret School: Preparations for Contact*, is a tedious collection of more fantasies and wild speculations. It was published by Harpercollins.

### **Time-Life Editors**

#### ***The Alternative Advisor: The Complete Guide to Natural Therapies and Alternative Treatments***

### **Time-Life Books**

Time-Life Books has jumped onto the health- hoax bandwagon with a confusing array of entries of the alternative medicine encyclopedia genre. This one is the pick of the litter – colorful, well organize and fat with fads and frauds. Aromatherapy, acupuncture, homeopathy, herbalism, and the rest are all just wonderful for whatever ails you, whether serious or trivial.

The book qualifies as a hoax because there is no disclaimer stating that the information is of psychosocial and historical interest only and that the therapies, for the most part, have not been shown to be safe and effective. Rather, the book is promoted as a “trustworthy, user-friendly medical information source for Americans in their homes.” Time-Life intends readers to rely on and use this misinformation for general family health care. It’s hard to believe that the highly-educated editors at this major publisher could be foolish enough to do so themselves. Where are the lawyers when we really need them?

There is a large section on the “Thirty Most Effective Homeopathic Remedies,” and another on the “Seventy-five Most Effective Herbs.” These elements add up to a hoax. Since all homeopathic remedies are equally ineffective, any list of the most effective ones is a lie. And since most Americans will never have good reason to use any herbal remedy except occasionally for symptomatic relief or mild psycho-activity such as with coffee or valerian, any list of 75 most effective herbs is inevitably misleading. In most cases there are safer and more effective remedies than the herbs mentioned.

Time-Life’s other entries in the health-hoax encyclopedia field include *The Drug and Natural Medicine Advisor*, and *The Medical Advisor: The Complete Guide to Alternative and Conventional Treatments, Home Edition*. The back cover of the former promises, “All the essentials – everything you need to know.”

An honest blurb for all the books would say “No one needs to know the homeopathic and other nonsense presented in this book. It is hard enough to keep up with all the truthful information we need for healthy living without cluttering

our minds with rot. But we made the book real pretty and it's cool to believe this kind of bullshit, so it makes a good prop for certain occasions.”

The latter title includes such gems as aromatherapy and homeopathy for lice; and reflexology and acupuncture for glaucoma. It promotes homeopathy for hundreds of symptoms and disorder, but the writers apparently do not understand the fundamental dogmas of the system. For example, for rabies homeopathic Echinacea is recommended to stimulate the immune system. But the herb is believed to be an immune stimulant in pharmacologic doses and therefore it must be an immune suppressant in homeopathic doses. If the theory were correct, homeopathic Echinacea would hasten death from rabies.

Of course, the theory is absurd and wasting time with homeopathy or herbs for rabies is surely madness second only to rabid-ness itself. Yet the book trumpets the praise of first Director of the Office of Alternative Medicine, Dr. Joseph J. Jacobs, who says the book is “an invaluable guide to New Age health care.”

This endorsement exposes the office as not a research center but a propaganda and disinformation agency. This book and the others promote the health fraud industries by presenting the scams as reasonable alternatives and complements to science-based medicine.

These books are in the same opportunistic, exploitative tradition as the earlier, extremely successful, *Mysteries of the Unknown* series. This twenty-part Time-Life series on psychic powers, UFOs, prophecies, Atlantis, astrology, and the like is generally strongly pro-paranormal. The advertising for it on television and by direct mail was sensationalist, pandering and deceptive. Nevertheless, a modicum of care was taken to present dissenting views, so the books probably do not qualify as hoaxes. The commercial success of the deceptive series probably helped inspire publication of the alternative medicine books. Unfortunately, believing nonsense about health care is generally more dangerous than believing nonsense about Atlantis.

**Ross Trattler, ND**

***Better health Through Natural Healing***

**McGraw-Hill**

This 600-page volume is a fairly comprehensive text of the teachings and practices of naturopaths today, though it omits some of the wilder quackery they often indulge in. Marketed to the general public, it is also assigned reading in some naturopathic college classes, and is widely praised in the alternative medicine media. It is in this Hall of Shame because it best represents the bizarre and archaic

nature of the theories and practices of this pseudoscientific-mystical mongrel of a healing system; and because it is published by a big player in the real science and medical fields, but knowingly promotes naturopathic claptrap with false and misleading claims.

For every disease Trattler, like any good naturopath, throws a fistful of snake oils at the problem and hopes they don't kill the patient before he gets better on his own and pays the bill. His treatment for arthritis, for example, involves more than 50 supplements, herbs, homeopathic remedies, glandulars, enzymes and the like. He comments, "Although the list is long, many more medicinal agents may be required to reach maximum results."

So while most patients treated by family medical doctors and rheumatologists are taking one or two drugs and given some simple exercises and sensible advice about diet, sleep and so on, those under the care of Trattler and his holistic ilk may be taking 50 to 100 medicines as well as undergoing other irrational and expensive treatments. This is convenient and lucrative for the naturopath if he happens to sell the "medicinal agents" and administer the other treatments, which is usually the case.

Trattler provides no references to support the treatments because there is no evidence to support them. McGraw-Hill has more than adequate resources to verify or falsify the claims, but chose not to. A cursory examination would have shown the editors that:

There is no scientific evidence to justify the remedies Trattler presents for dozens of serious and minor conditions;

Many of the remedies, especially the vitamins, herbs, and hormones are toxic in the amounts Trattler recommends, and several are potentially lethal;

Trattler's recommended spinal manipulations, enemas, fasting, and irrational dietary prescriptions and proscriptions are dangerous;

There is no evidence for the prescriptions that Trattler brags are based on phony psychic Edgar Cayce's readings;

The vitamins, herbs and miscellaneous snake oils could interfere with a real doctor's treatment of serious conditions;

Trattler's typical naturopathic contempt for vaccinations is ignorant, foolish and dangerous;

Trattler's treatments and prescriptions for sick children, including those who get preventable contagious diseases because of anti-vax nuts like naturopaths, amount to child abuse.

Instead of taking the time to learn these facts and turn the project down, McGraw-Hill did the trendy and sleazy thing to do: publish it, complete with the usual naturopathic clichés and lying mantras about treating causes, strengthening the body's defenses and so on. The back cover promotion claims that this "essential family resource draws on the latest scientific research." This is a brazen lie. Neither Trattler nor McGraw-Hill could provide me with a single reference to support his prescriptions for a single disease. The book is clearly a hoax, as is naturopathy itself.

**Dana Ullman**

*Homeopathy, Medicine for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

**North Atlantic Books**

There are many health hoax books now extolling the wonders of the thoroughly delusional and fraudulent medical system known as homeopathy, but this one takes the cake. It belongs in this great hall because it best illustrates the true nature of homeopathy with its inscrutable spirit essences, magic, paradoxes, absurdities, and fuzzy NewsAgeThink. It speaks volumes about the alternative medicine movement.

Ullman's claims are so obviously contrary to fact and so egregiously preposterous that, taken as a whole, they constitute a hoax since he presents them as scientifically established. This brief review is a peek into the netherworld of homeopathic alchemy. We examine some of the claims that make this book a hoax and the entire industry a huge swindle. Homeopathy will be argued about in the courts someday. Several cases seem well on their way as we go to press.

Ullman claims repeatedly that homeopathic remedies stimulate the immune system, yet he presents not a scintilla of evidence to support the claim, which is absurd. Like most homeopathy promoters, Ullman asserts that vaccination against infectious diseases is based on the homeopathic "law of similars." There is not scrap of truth to this crude propaganda ploy, this absurd lie.

Ullman claims homeopathy has superior diagnostic and treatment systems. The medical diagnosis is irrelevant since the homeopath only wants to know the patient's constitutional medicine (see below), and what poison causes symptoms most closely resembling those of the patient. Homeopathic doses of that poison are then administered.

He claims success in treating AIDS, herpes, influenza, bladder infections, ear infections, strep throat, meningitis, chickenpox, various chronic diseases, pregnancy-related symptoms and disorders and breech presentation, mental disorders, neurological disorders, cancers, and every kind of injury. He also claims that homeopathic remedies are effective against the plague, cholera, scarlet fever, yellow fever and typhoid, and predicts they will largely replace antibiotics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Then we have the hare-brained concept of a constitutional medicine, “a substance that one has a mystical affinity with, one that should be taken in homeopathic doses no matter what the illness is ... Homeopathy is the science of finding the medicine that is most similar to the person... a substance that matches the essence of the person’s characteristics.”

When treating infections in women, Ullman says, “It is not so important to know what microorganism has infected the woman as it is to know what kind of woman the microorganism has infected.” For example, if you are a Sepia woman, one who in the sense of magical affinity resembles a cuttlefish, then your constitutional medicine is homeopathically prepared cuttlefish. It’s hilariously absurd, but also frightening. This is the kind of mental fungus that has engulfed the alternative medicine movement along with the media and their mobs.

It gets worse. Consider Ullman’s belief in the inheritance of acquired diseases (or something “similar”) in the form of “miasms.” For example, if one of your parents or even a distant relative had gonorrhea before you were born you may inherit a gonorrheal “miasm” which means you “tend to manifest symptoms of overgrowth of tissue such as enlarged organs, tumors, warts, cysts, excess weight, accumulation of mucus and disturbances of the pelvis and sexual organs, and you may be restless, cross, irritable, absentminded, selfish and mischievous.”

Ullman’s medicine for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is partly a return to the tired old dogmas of Lamarck and Lysenko, and partly magic and mysticism. This is typical of New Age alternative medicine.

Like many homeopaths, Ullman also believes in diagnostic gadgets reminiscent of 19<sup>th</sup> Century electronic quackery. Electrical conductance is measured between alleged acupuncture points with a galvanometer “while the patient holds on to bottles containing different homeopathic pills. The medicine that is found to normalize the readings” is then prescribed.

Yes, holding a bottle containing pills of substances diluted to zero concentration affects your vital force in a measureable way. This is Ullman’s vision of 21<sup>st</sup> Century medicine.

Promotions for the book claim it presents scientific support for homeopathy. This is a lie. The publisher claims scores of homeopathic medicines are effective for practically every disease, disorder and injury known, yet the book presents only a handful of questionable studies to support the use of a half dozen remedies in a few self-limiting conditions. This is typical of homeopathic logic. Hahnemann developed the whole theory of homeopathy after one experiment of the effects of one drug on himself, and he didn't even use a homeopathic dose in the study.

Humpty Dumpty said to Alice, "When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less." Ullman echoes this sentiment and his own products show how absurd the homeopathic business is. For example, his "homeopathic tranquilizer" contains passionflower, hops and chamomile. This product violates classical homeopathic principles in several ways.

Homeopathic medicines are supposed to be given only after proper "provings" and only one at a time. Here is a combination product, and it has not been "proved." Moreover, since these herbs are generally recognized as tranquilizers in normal doses they should be stimulants in homeopathic doses. Yet the product is sold as a tranquilizer. With homeopathy the pills are whatever their peddlers say they are. No one can tell the difference because there's really nothing in them.

According to homeopathic dogma, a homeopathic tranquilizer should contain a few molecules, or at least the inscrutable vibrational essence, of caffeine, ephedrine, amphetamine or other stimulant. Of course, like all real homeopathic products, it wouldn't do anything, but that is what it should consist of, according to the theory.

When I asked Ullman about this he defended the product and label by saying it had not been potentized. That is, it had not been beaten silly and diluted stepwise according to homeopathic principles, so it still has its primary or pharmacological effect of tranquilizing. In other words, it is not a homeopathic product at all. Yet he sells it as one.

What more proof do we need that the industry is exempt from truth-in-labeling laws, and is perpetrating ongoing frauds? And that, with the Pandora's Box of homeopathic remedies now open again, anyone can put anything into a bottle and call it a remedy for anything? But then that was already true, thanks to the law deregulating the promotion and sale of all OTC drugs labeled dietary supplements.

Instead of explaining the paradoxes and providing me with evidence that his claims of cures are true, Ullman threatened to sue me for libel if I persisted in criticizing him. (Parts of this review were adopted from my book *A Consumer's Guide to "Alternative Medicine"* published by Prometheus Books.)



## Chapter Three

### Broadcasters Romance the Charlatans and Shun the Scientists

In 1992 Prometheus Books published a book I wrote about fringe nutrition and medicine. The title I had submitted was *An Encyclopedia of Quackery*. However, publishers usually have the last word on book titles and in this case the title was changed to *A Consumer's Guide to "Alternative Medicine."* The text was not changed; it was still an encyclopedic exposé of quackery. Prometheus was concerned that my original title might provoke lawsuits from quacks I exposed and discussed in the book, even if not called quacks in the text.

Whether intended or not, the new title also had a positive public-relations effect, at least initially. Because of the universal pro-health-fraud bias in the media, I was more likely to be invited to radio and television talk shows if the producers, in their haste, believed I was promoting alternative medicine rather than criticizing it. Once on the show, I could let the cat out of the bag and a stimulating row would ensue. This would at least draw attention to the book, which was the best we could hope for.

Producers bit quite often, but the results were rarely positive for us. For example, in 1993 I got a call from a producer of CBS's *48 Hours*. She said they were planning a show on alternative medicine and asked if I would be a consultant. She said she had just received a copy of *A Consumer's Guide to "Alternative Medicine,"* and thought I could help.

Wow, a breakthrough. Maybe the media are finally coming to their senses. She wanted to start right away with a brief interview, then talk more as production proceeded. I said fine and she started by asking if I could give her some examples of people who had been miraculously cured by alternative medicine.

Uh-oh! I asked if she had read the book. She said she didn't have time. I suggested she read at least parts of it before having the discussions. She said okay, but couldn't I give her a couple quick examples now? I said I could give her several examples of people who had been killed or maimed and ripped off by alternative medicine, and I prepared to tell her about the naturopath who killed his beautiful young wife with his snake oils, and other horror stories. Suddenly she didn't have

time to talk, and said she would get back to me. She never did. The show a few weeks later was a typical mindless promotion of quackery.

This kind of thing has been the story of my life for twenty years. I'm not prone to paranoid fantasies and I don't imagine that I am a lonely persecuted soul. On the contrary, there are scores of scientists, rationalists and skeptics who have likewise been excluded from important public debates by all branches of the mass media for many years. If I have been shunned, excluded and censored more than most it is only because I have made more efforts to be heard than most.

When I first started writing on health-related matters it was obvious that the media needed help with science and health reporting. I naively believed that my degrees in physiology and nutrition, my experience in clinical settings, and my rationalist, consumer-rights perspective would enhance my opportunities to work with the media. The possibilities of public health education through books, articles, a syndicated column and talk show appearances seemed endless. However, strange thing happened on my way to work.

First I learned that publishers are rarely interested in honest books on nutrition and health that are written by responsible professionals. Most are waiting for the next exciting manuscript promoting yet another new, revolutionary miracle diet fraud so they can turn it into the latest bestselling health hoax book. The non-nutritionists who write most of the popular books on nutrition know nothing about the science but they dream up clever gimmicks.

Since most publishers of health-related books engage in the sleazy business of selling health hoax books, the last person they want to hear from is a real nutritionist, especially one who specializes in exposing the hazards of nutrition misinformation and diet scams. Literary agents, mostly English and business majors, know this and are reluctant to take on rationalist clients. Without agents, writers rarely get a foot in the door.

Rejected by dozens of publishers, I lucked into a talented novice agent through a close friend who happened to know her. She worked hard and landed me a publisher. My first book *The Best Medicine*, published by Harper and Row in 1985, is an encyclopedia of science-based preventive medicine with a large section exposing the major forms of nutrition and health fraud. It had already been rejected because of this by Contemporary Books, a smaller publisher that wrote off a \$4,000 advance rather than publish criticisms of nonsense promoted in other books in its catalog.

I included the material because expensive and dangerous quackery has become so pervasive in our society that learning to avoid it is an important part of preventive

medicine. When Harper and Row picked up the book they were not in the health hoax racket and had released only one or two questionable health-related titles in many years. It was an excellent choice by my agent, but a total fluke. Since then the publisher has been swallowed up by the Murdock empire, wherein publishing a book like mine would be unthinkable.

Second, I learned that if a rationalist writer does, against all odds, find a publisher, promotion of the book is difficult because the media managers, writers, and talkers don't want to hear about nutrition and health from a scientific perspective. The miracle diets are more entertaining and more fun to believe, and therefore more newsworthy and profitable. Unless you present a sensational new gimmick and make outlandish claims, that is, unless you lie, the newspaper feature writers won't interview you, the men's and women's magazines won't publish excerpts from your book, and television and radio talk shows won't invite you for a chat.

Third, I learned that, by some insidious and mysterious process, the vast majority of mass media writers, editors, producers, talkers and reporters have come to believe that it is an integral part of their jobs to publicize and promote charlatans, especially health-fraud artists, and their swindles at every possible opportunity. I have examined the course descriptions from colleges that train these people and have found no indication that this is an overt or explicit process.

Eager young students entering journalism and communications departments are not told that when they go to work in the field in a few years, they will be continually pressured into partnerships with the snake oil industries and the psychic mafia. They are not told that they will spend much of their careers in the media unteaching the public some of the most important lessons taught by other departments such as the natural sciences, nutrition, health and physical education, psychology, consumer education, medicine, law, and philosophy (both epistemology and ethics).

Yet anyone who examines the facts can see that this is what happens. The astonishing ignorance, fuzzy thinking, cynicism, amorality, and social irresponsibility now rampant in the mass media industries is a poor reflection on their training grounds. It is fair to ask whether any other university departments and schools do such a poor job of instilling a sense of professionalism and simple decency in their graduates.

In Chapter One we gave examples of the problem in the print media. In this, Chapter Three, we examine television and radio, starting with examples of lying for fun and profit by the Hawaii media. If you look closely at almost any local

media you will find a similar situation. Later in this chapter we look at the national media.

### **KGMB, the Charlatans' Best Friend**

KGMB Television's long-running and popular *The Hawaii Moving Company* is a weekly 30-minute magazine that positions itself as wholesome family entertainment and is hosted by popular local personality Michael W. Perry. Its three or four segments usually feature local entertainers, athletes, artists, celebrities, animals, or ordinary people who do interesting and amusing things. Unfortunately, from time to time it features stories about the paranormal, UFOs and the like, always in a promotional way. The worst of these was a segment promoting Reverend Willard Fuller's miracle dental healings.

Reverend Fuller is a Florida faith healer who calls himself "The Psychic Dentist" and claims to routinely perform dental miracles on those who believe. Performing to crowds in the old traveling evangelist style, he says he inserts new fillings, changes silver amalgam to gold, cures periodontal disease, and even grows new teeth, all instantly and without pain.

As explained by James Randi in *The Faith Healers*, Fuller convinces many that the miracles happen because people aren't very observant about their own teeth, because regular amalgam can appear yellowish with a dim flashlight, and because they want to believe. When they later realize that no miracle occurred, Fuller's circus has left town or they are too embarrassed to complain, or they blame their lack of faith for the fading and erasure of the miracle.

This might all be just fun and games if it weren't for two problems. One, during his performance Fuller goes into the crowd with a variety of dental tools for examining teeth, and he sticks them into the mouth of one person after another without sterilizing them in between subjects. This alone makes him a public health menace.

The second problem is that Fuller's ministrations are fraudulent and expensive. Weeks before he arrived in Honolulu, KGMB started hyping *Hawaii Moving Company's* upcoming special on the Psychic Dentist, and they invited the public to attend the "seminar" for \$400 per head. The show was taped at the "seminar" and several smiling suckers attested to their happiness with their new dental work. There were no real dentists on hand to witness and attest to the miracles.

During the show Perry said that Fuller has performed 40,000 miraculous dental healings. Let's do a little arithmetic here. If he charges all attendee \$400 as he did in Honolulu, that's \$16 million dollars just from those who received miracles.

Since they are only a fraction of the paying attendees, this is just a fraction of his income. And it's all tax exempt, since it is done under the guise of religion.

This latter day Elmer Gantry makes the original look like a cockroach. Perry is a bright guy and I'm sure he can do simple multiplication. Instead of seeing an opportunity for a brilliant exposé and a chance to perform a great public service, Perry apparently saw a chance to join in the swindle.

Another *Hawaii Moving Company* episode was essentially an infomercial for self-appointed hypnotherapist Alonzo Demello. It featured a woman who went to him because of feelings of stress and insomnia. The hypnotic sessions convinced her that she had been abducted, molested and medically experimented on by space aliens many times. She was grateful that Demello helped her understand this was true and not a delusion. Perry closed with assurance that Demello can help with a wide variety of psychological problems. "Call us; we'll help you get in touch," he said.

Perry did a similar promotion on *The Hawaiian Moving Company* for a chi kung practitioner who claimed to possess miraculous healing powers. Again he offered to put audience members in touch with the healer. Again I suspect payola.

The various media profiteer from romancing the charlatans in three basic ways. One is by pandering to the fantasies and wishful thinking of their audience, that is, by promoting and exploiting gullibility, ignorance and foolishness. Another is by earning the charlatans' advertising accounts. The third is by earning the charlatans' celebrity-endorsement accounts. All three are in violation of the *Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics* and are thoroughly reprehensible by normal civilized standards, but they are common in this business.

The second method holds the possibility of something most people consider very corrupt, even sinister, that is, surreptitious or confidential payments for the production and airing of features that promote the charlatans. In essence these are program-length advertisements, or infomercials, disguised as nonfiction features. How often this happens is anyone's guess, but considering the enormous amounts of money involved and the lack of professional ethics in the industry, I would bet it is very common.

I complained in writing to KGMB management about the psychic dentist show and said it appeared to be an infomercial-type production passed off as a nonfiction feature. I said I suspected hanky-panky and asked whether Fuller had paid in any way for the production and airing of the show. I suspected he had, at the very least, paid a great deal for the barrage of ads for the "seminar" which appeared to be a

KGMB and Fuller co-production. I had never before seen so much hype about one *Moving Company* episode. KGMB seems to be a partner in this massive swindle.

At the end of the show Perry said, "I'll leave it to you to decide if it's real." Shades of *Weekly World News*.

I wrote to Perry:

"Thanks a lot, Michael, but how is the average person supposed to decide if it's real on the basis of your biased report? All you had to do to help us decide was to take a dentist or two with you and have them do before and after exams. I cannot believe that such a simple step did not occur to an intelligent person like yourself, so you must have deliberately chosen not to do this.

"In other words, you chose to hide the truth from your audience and to deceive them. Excuse me for being highly suspicious, but there must be a reason for this conspiracy to deceive and defraud. The only reason I can imagine that you would betray your audience and risk your reputation is for money. Since you are the highest-paid media personality in the state, I suspect it must have been a great deal of money."

I have never received a reply, not even a denial of payola, from Perry or anyone else at the station.

Whatever the truth about this sordid affair, it is not an isolated episode. KGMB and its news and feature hosts have a long history of promoting charlatans of various stripes and ignoring complaints about its bias and irresponsibility. For example, while the psychic dentist affair was a one-shot deal, KGMB had a similar arrangement with phony psychic Dayle Schear for many years. Schear is one of the most obnoxious phony psychics on the scene these days. She claims to be telepathic, clairvoyant, able to see into the future and into your pockets, and able to bend spoons with her mind.

Based in Hawaii, Schear has also spread her tentacles deep into California and Nevada. She makes frequent media appearances to bolster her telephone psychic consulting business, which is regularly advertised in the local dailies. She used to frequently make predictions about politics and sporting events, but they were almost always wrong, and she rarely makes such predictions any more. I once did a survey of her public pronouncements over a period of several months and found that she had an accuracy rate of about 2%. Most ordinary people do better just by chance, yet Schear claims remarkable psychic powers and charges as much as lawyers and doctors for her services.

During the OJ Simpson trial Schear was hyped in a *Hard Copy* broadcast that labeled her the “OJ psychic.” This positive national exposure gave her business a huge boost. She unequivocally predicted a hung jury, which was the conventional wisdom at the time. Months later when she was proved wrong *Hard Copy* continued to refer to her as the OJ psychic.

Schear is not just obnoxious, but is also a public menace. Like many other psychics, she often plays psychologist, marriage counselor, financial consultant, career counselor, and nutritionist, though she is not qualified in any of these fields and can only guess what her clients really need. I once heard Schear on a radio show tell a caller that her fiancé is unfaithful and that she should dump him. The caller had revealed nothing about her love life except that she was engaged. While this is outrageous on the face of it, part of me says that if the woman is stupid enough to call Schear and to believe her, the man is better off without her. Only in that twisted sense does Schear perform a genuine service.

Like most psychics, Schear asks questions a real psychic (if one existed) should not have to ask, along the lines of: What’s with travel? Who has stomach trouble? Who has back trouble? Who is the man named Bob in your life (or the woman named Mary)? She is fishing for clues, of course. She gets information this way and feeds it back to the subject.

KGMB has had a long and profitable relationship with Schear. She regularly purchases an hour in the late evening to run her infomercial. She is introduced by Michael W. Perry, who thus directly participates in her fraud. A very brief notice makes it clear that the show is a Dayle Schear paid production, but KGMB promotes the infomercial with spots that make it look like regular programming. I have never seen that done for any other infomercial.

Schear also manages to get it listed in *TV Guide* and local papers as a regular show called *ESP and You*, rather than “Paid Programming” like all the other infomercials aired here. This is done for both the listing and the display ads for the program.

I have complained repeatedly to KGMB and the publications, to no avail. Only *TV Guide* agreed with my complaint and indicated it was paid programming for a while, but soon reverted to the misleading listing. Since Schear purchases large ad blocks in the magazine she probably managed to pressure them into the deceptive listing.

Schear’s cynicism and contempt for her clients is illustrated by the theme song she played for years in her infomercial. The Alan Parsons Project song, *Eye in the Sky* includes this chorus:

“I am the eye in the sky,  
Looking at you,  
I can read your mind,  
I am the maker of rules  
Dealing with fools,  
I can cheat you blind.”

Perry did an introduction to an hour-long infomercial for Dayle Schear. He praised her psychic abilities, such as finding missing persons and identifying crime suspects. She can see into a different level of time with her ESP, he said. He called her a protégé of world-famous psychic Peter Hurkos, whose ESP had helped identify the Boston Strangler.

In fact, Dutchman Peter Hurkos was a notorious charlatan and liar, and Perry knew it or should have known it because he has a copy of at least one of the books that expose him, *Flim-Flam* by magician James Randi. I introduced Perry to Randi about ten years ago and Randi explained how psychoids like Hurkos and Schear operate. Perry seemed impressed and enlightened, but it was all an act.

Another KGMB newscaster who frequently promotes quackery and fraud is health correspondent Sandra Sagisi, who holds a BA in communications and journalism from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. In one feature during the local news she interviewed a Hawaiian traditional healer doing lomi lomi (a type of massage) on a woman with lung cancer. The healer claimed that her treatment had reduced the tumor by half.

Sagisi did not verify the claim with the woman’s physician, she did not ask about conventional treatment that might have been responsible for any improvement and she did not follow up on the story. For all we know the claim was a lie and the woman died weeks later. Or the woman recovered due to radiation and chemotherapy.

Most people would be intensely curious about these matters and, given a chance, would try to learn the truth. But Sagisi demonstrated the brain-dead approach to her work that typifies the postmodern pseudo-journalist.

Sagisi once did a news feature about a “natural physician” named Cass Igram, MD, who was promoting his book on nutrition while vacationing in Hawaii. He has no credentials in nutrition and at least 95% of real nutritionists would strongly disagree with most of his contentions. For example, he claims that pantothenic

acid, a B vitamin, is scarce and vegetarians are especially at risk of deficiency. We should all be eating organ meats and egg yolks to get enough. He also recommends beef, butter and lamb fats as beneficial.

In fact, the very name of the vitamin comes from the Greek for “present everywhere.” Deficiency occurs only with other deficiencies during famines or starvation due to anorexia or severe alcoholism. Vegetarians get more than enough pantothenic acid from whole grains, vegetables and beans. Gorging on high-animal-fat foods is foolish advice. I wrote and told Sagisi these things, and asked for rebuttal time. I added,

“I have been a Hawaii resident all my life. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in physiology and a Master of Science in nutrition. For ten years I have been writing books and articles and speaking out for the consumer. Multiple review copies of all my books, highly acclaimed by eminent health professionals, have been sent to KGMB and I have repeatedly let you know that I am available for interviews, consultations and advice on health-and nutrition-related stories. Yet I have never been invited to discuss my ideas on a KGMB health segment. But Igram comes to town and, bingo, he gets on your show. How does he rate such favorable treatment? Is it because he poses as a ‘natural physician’? Or did he or his agent pay you to do the story? Was it really a disguised commercial?”

Sagisi did not reply and I have yet to be invited to the studio for a chat. She has also done promotional features for other diet quacks, including the notorious Robert Atkins, MD. I had sent her a copy of my book on alternative medicine, which has a detailed critique of the Atkins scam, so she can’t plead ignorance, except deliberate and intentional ignorance. While the critique is thorough, it is written at about a tenth-grade level, so it shouldn’t be beyond her grasp. Again I let her know that I am available for free advice and consultations on stories at any time, but she ignored me. Once again a rational consumer advocate and health professional can only wonder in frustration at the irresponsible behavior of the media.

Sagisi once did a story about a karate instructor who claims to channel external chi with his mind, and thereby perform amazing healings. He has no credentials in any health science or profession and he is not an engineer, but in addition to his ability to channel chi through his hands, he invented a machine that focuses chi on patients and thereby heals them. He said he took this healing machine to Ukraine where he treated people with radiation sickness from the Chernobyl accident, and it cured all who got the treatment.

Sagisi expressed no skepticism about any of his claims and did not interview any skeptics or physicians about them. She did not respond to my letter complaining about the story. I'm still waiting for the awarding of a Nobel Prize to this man.

In 1995 after Sagisi did a promotional story on shark cartilage I sent her the following letter.

“There you go again, promoting quackery and snake oils. I am referring to your story on shark cartilage last night. If you had any respect for the truth and any sense of responsibility, you would have made the following three points:

- Sharks do get cancer, even cancer of the cartilage. The quacks' claim is a lie.
- Like all proteins consumed orally, shark cartilage from pills is digested before absorption and therefore is physiologically inactive. Yet your story showed bottles of the health fraud store products as if they had any relevance to the study you mentioned that used shark cartilage enemas.
- The insane fad of taking shark cartilage pills is devastating shark populations around the world.”

Sagisi ignored me, as usual. In fact, in the next few months KGMB ran at least two more stories promoting shark cartilage. Recently I faxed Sagisi and the news department information about a study reported at a major cancer specialists' meeting. The study shows shark cartilage is ineffective against cancer. KGMB refused to mention the study. This refusal to tell the truth is the rule these days when it comes to media coverage of these kinds of issues. Most people consider this type of behavior lying, but they don't know that journalists lie to them every day.

Sandra Sagisi was at her most irresponsible and unethical in her role at a quackery-promoting conference on Maui. This is discussed in Chapter Four.

### **More Dishonest Broadcasters**

Though the sheer volume of misinformation they broadcast is not as great, the other Honolulu television stations are hardly better than KGMB. NBC affiliate KHON's health correspondent Mary Zanakis did a series on vitamin and mineral supplements that touted their alleged benefits but didn't mention their hazards. In one segment she present “two experts who disagree on supplements,” a nutrition professor from the University of Hawaii and a naturopath. They each commented for a minute or two and left the public not a bit wiser. I wrote to Zanakis and explained:

“Your presenting the naturopath as the equal of the nutrition professor is a gross misrepresentation of the facts. The professor studied scientific nutrition for many years and did original research in the field. The naturopath studied a smattering of cult nutrition taught by other naturopaths. Naturopathy is an unscientific and dangerous fringe healing cult that is licensed in only eight states. Naturopaths learn cult nutrition and they peddle pills and cult diets. They do not do research, they just learn and teach unsupported fringe ideas that they make money on.

“I have enclosed a copy of the list of faculty from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine, your guest’s alma mater. As you can see, no one on the list has credentials in nutrition. Naturopaths have an unethical relationship with the health food (fraud) industry. The stores promote them and their books. They and their books, in turn, promote supplementation at levels unsupported by the scientific evidence and dangerous to their customers. The naturopaths’ use of bogus techniques to diagnose alleged deficiencies, prescribe remedies for them and then fill the prescriptions is a scandalous rip-off. The media should be exposing these licensed con artists, not lending them credibility and parading them before the public as experts.”

The problem, of course, is that the broadcaster, which advertises supplements and health food stores, also has a commercial relationship with the industry, and this prevents objective reporting. I have sent Zanakis and others at KHON copies of my books and repeatedly offered my help on nutrition-related stories. They have ignored me and all my complaints and offers for many years.

Zanakis once did a horrendous promotional feature for herbal medicines. She presented testimonials and spoke about their growing popularity and respectability. In closing she made a token gesture to sanity by warning the public to watch out for charlatans by checking their credentials.

But what credentials should we watch for and watch out for? She didn’t say. I wrote and asked her to clarify this and pointed out that there are scores of con artists in Hawaii who pose as legitimate health professionals and some even call themselves “Dr.” on the basis of diploma-mill PhDs and meaningless “certification.”

Moreover, I told her, many licensed “physicians” such as chiropractors, naturopaths and acupuncturists, endanger and exploit their clients with irrational herbal prescriptions. I offered to help her do a story on this problem, and thereby help protect consumer rights in the health field. As usual, she ignored me. Like

most stories on alternative medicine, her piece was designed to titillate and promote without providing any useful information.

KITV, the ABC affiliate, also provides some gems. Feature reporter Pamela Young once did a story promoting a psychologist who uses astrology in her practice. One of her techniques is to find an asteroid with the same name as the patient, then use its orbit to understand the patient and get insight into his or her future. I wrote to Young,

“Any reporter who thinks that the fates of people, whose first names are coincidentally the same as chunks of rocks in outer space, are somehow tied to the orbits of their namesakes must be a blithering idiot. Any psychologist who believes it must be a quack.”

I asked Young (who I had previously tangled with over scam-promoting pseudo-journalism) to look into the astro-shrink’s acceptance of Medicare and HMO reimbursements, and the like, so that citizens can know what they are paying for. She ignored me. This episode illustrates an unwritten but fundamental rule of postmodern pseudo-journalists, that no real investigative reporting of New Age crappola is allowed, only promotional puff pieces. Thus they have become the primary disseminators of nonsense and foolishness in our society. And they get taxpayer-guaranteed loans to go to college and learn this racket.

Another recent KITV episode illustrates the corrupting influence that the fraudulent paranormal industries have on the media. Like most television broadcasters, KITV sells a great deal of advertising time to the telephone psychic industry. On the *Good Morning Hawaii* show, reporter Tiny Tadani did a long promotional segment with a spokeswoman for Psychic Friends Network and a self-proclaimed psychic herself. He tossed her some softballs to illustrate her powers and acted suitably amazed when, for example, she told him how many kids he has (one). This information is available on a bio sheet from KITV to anyone who asks.

The next day I phoned and spoke with him. I called the episode a disgusting sham, an insult to the viewers’ intelligence, a violation of journalistic ethics, and a rip-off. He vigorously defended the show and the psychic. He said he believed she really is psychic, but he would not help me arrange a proper test of her powers.

KITV’s health reporter is Dick Allgire, a vegan zealot who has allied himself with the local health fraud stores. In his independent productions aired on community-access television he rails against the meat and dairy industries, but is silent about the sins of the health fraud industry. For years I have urged him to do at least one little exposé of quackery in the islands, and I suggested he investigate the scam of Gene Sage, who I discuss in detail in Chapter Four. Sage uses several bogus

diagnostic techniques, including a so-called live cell analysis, to convince people they need to buy his snake oils. I offered Allgire all the materials he would need to do the story, but he repeatedly declined.

One day in mid-1997 I heard him on the radio substituting for a talk show host who frequently promotes questionable health schemes. His guest was James Privitera, MD, originator of the live cell analysis scam and a convicted cancer quack. For an hour Allgire helped Privitera sell his new health hoax book and promote assorted health frauds including live cell analysis and chelation therapy.

Allgire was well aware of Privitera's criminal record and the fraudulent nature of the diagnostic system, but he said nothing about these. Nor did he challenge Privitera's claim that laetrile, the phony cancer cure that can cause cyanide poisoning, is a natural cancer remedy that spares patients the horrors of the "cutting, burning and poisoning" of conventional cancer therapy. He did, however, commiserate with Privitera on the stupidity of doctors and the evils of the medical establishment.

Allgire lied when he introduced Privitera as "a doctor that the medical community doesn't want you to know about." It is typical of quacks to play oppressed martyrs beleaguered by the evil medical establishment, and Allgire played right along. He let Privitera boast about his purported expertise, but said nothing about his conviction for health fraud. The truth is, good doctors would love the public to know all about Privitera because he is an excellent case study of the most vicious kind of quackery.

It is the quackophiles in the media like Dick Allgire who don't want the public to know the truth about him and his ilk, and will go to any lengths to suppress it. Crying cover-up while perpetrating a cover-up has become standard operating procedure for the postmodern media. It's another example of lying for fun and profit.

Throughout the hour Allgire repeatedly promoted Privitera's book and made sure listeners had the phone number to order it. The entire show was like an hour-long infomercial. He closed with an invitation to Privitera to appear on his television show next time he's in town.

I sent Kaiser Permanente (the sponsor of his TV show) a letter complaining about the show and I sent Allgire a copy of the letter. He replied in a letter suggesting where I might find psychiatric care. There it was, in black and white, and I have framed it. The once proud profession of journalism has come to this: you ask that they simply tell the truth, the whole truth, as required by their own code of ethics, and the postmodern pseudo-journalists sincerely believe you must be insane.

Like other local reporters, Allgire recently reported that an acupuncturist hired by the state was achieving spectacular results treating drug addicts in prison. A few minutes of needling a day for a few weeks was all it took. The reported success rate was far higher than that of two-year residential programs with intensive group therapy, work, and job training.

One would think that the incredible claims would be worthy of serious investigation, but we're so used to the media hyping the miracles of traditional Chinese medicine that now we yawn at reports of even its most amazing achievements. I don't believe the claims for a minute, but most taxpayers are not sophisticated enough to doubt the stories and they don't protest when their pockets are picked by organized health fraud aided and abetted by the media.

KITV recently moved to a new studio and became the nation's very first all-digital television broadcaster. One of the first news programs by the proud staff included a segment about their use of a professional feng shui practitioner to help them properly place their equipment, furniture and so on. It's much more than interior decorating, they said, because it promotes the proper flow of various inscrutable energies.

These are the kinds of journalists who provide tens of millions of Americans with their only view of the world and bring them "truth" every day. They use the highest of high-tech marvels in the service of the most primitive and preposterous superstitions and they're proud of it. The purpose of their installing the advanced electronics is not to improve newsgathering and reporting, but to increase the profits to be made by lying for entertainment. Their goal is not to arm viewers with information that might make them better citizens and wiser consumers, but to confuse, befuddle, dumb down, and stupidify them so they will be gullible and compliant consumers.

Since they are so enamored with Chinese philosophy, much more so than with their own professional code of ethics, perhaps the KITV people should heed this from *Analects* by Confucius: "The aim of the superior man is truth." Or maybe this old Chinese proverb will impress them "One man tells a lie, dozens repeat it as the truth." Modern mass media require this modification: "One man (say, Dick Allgire) tells a lie, thousands repeat it as the truth." Allgire learned his craft at the University of Utah School of Broadcast.

### **[CBS, The Eye that Refuses to See](#)**

If the Hawaii media shenanigans described so far don't sound like your local media, I suspect you haven't looked and listened closely enough to notice. There is no denying that local and national radio and television exhibit the same severe

symptoms of fulminating postmodernism and tabloidization. This is not surprising since the media personnel, whether working locally or nationally, are educated in the same colleges and develop similar attitudes towards their business. Moreover, the locals and nationals are often affiliated, and journalists and quasi-journalists move freely in the industry, so working philosophies and ethical standards are similar at all levels.

Still, one would expect a bit more professionalism or at least pretense thereto, from the better-paid nationals with their larger audiences, larger budgets, and greater responsibilities. After all, more power confers greater responsibility, does it not? Alas, to them it only confers greater opportunity to lie for fun and profit. The following examples show that the nation media stars are no more professional or ethical than the lesser local lights.

At the start of this chapter I described my personal encounter with the cynical bias of CBS's *48 Hours* and its lying by omission. Another example of this behavior is recounted by UFO expert Philip J. Klass in *Skeptical Inquirer*. In early 1994 *48 Hours* interviewed him in Roswell about the alleged flying saucer crash of 1947. During the taping he pulled out of his pocket a once-top-secret document that disproves the claims of a UFO crash in the area. He discussed its contents, which indicated that top Air Force and Navy officials suspected that UFOs were Soviet spy vehicles. The entire interview was cut from the broadcast.

Two years later Klass was contacted by CBS regarding a show it was producing for A&E cable television. He provided copies of his *Skeptics UFO Newsletter* with quotes from once-secret documents showing that there had not been a UFO crash in Roswell. He also provided a copy of a recent talk he had given on the very biased treatment of the UFO issue by many television shows, including *48 Hours* two years before. He was later interviewed and he provided photocopies of some of the documents. He emphasized that they had never before been shown on TV.

When the show aired it did not include any of the interview or any mention of the documents. Once again, *48 Hours*, hosted by Dan Rather, chose to deceive, even at the cost of passing up that most coveted of journalistic accomplishment, a scoop.

In 1995 another *48 Hours* episode on alternative medicine titled "Healing or Hype?" was all hype. With only the slightest pretense of being a serious investigation, it publicized megavitamins, Ayurvedic medicine, chelation therapy, ozone therapy and other unproven and dangerous remedies for cancer and other serious diseases. It gave a promotional forum to Nicholas Gonzales, MD. He had adopted the methods of convicted criminal cancer quack William Kelly, who

claims spectacular results treating cancer patients with pancreatic enzymes, coffee enemas, buckets of supplements, and a diet high in fatty meats.

Two skeptics, Marcia Angel, MD, Executive Editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine* and cancer fraud specialist Saul Green, PhD, were given just a few seconds to comment.

*60 minutes*, the networks' sister show, is one of the longest running most watched news programs in history. It has pretensions to greatness in investigative reporting, but in fact is even more notorious than *48 Hours* for its bias and distortions that aid and abet quackery. For example, two 1993 broadcasts strongly promoted the shark cartilage scam. The powdered product, packed into pills and sold in health fraud stores, is allegedly a remedy and preventive for cancer. This idea was concocted by entrepreneur I. William Lane, and publicized in his books, *Sharks Don't Get Cancer* and *Sharks Still Don't Get Cancer*.

The very titles are lies, since sharks do get cancer, and they still do, even cancer of the cartilage. The reporters could have learned this by phoning any of several major aquariums or university marine biology departments, but they were negligent and incompetent, or they deliberately deceived the viewers.

The cartilage supposedly contains a protein that inhibits the growth of new blood vessels (angiogenesis), which is essential to tumor growth. But the product has never been shown to have anti-angiogenesis effects in humans, for example in wound healing or in uterine lining proliferation during the menstrual cycle. And even if it did have such potential the orally ingested protein would be destroyed by the digestive process and would not get to the tumor. If it were absorbed intact or if it were injected it would cause potentially lethal allergic reactions. In short, the idea is preposterous.

Nevertheless, Mike Wallace and his crew traveled to Cuba for their story on cancer patients being treated with shark cartilage enemas. The patients were shown exercising and Wallace reported that most of them felt better after several weeks of treatment. He didn't mention that subjective impressions are not a reliable indicator of effectiveness of a cancer treatment; that the so-called experts running the studies weren't really qualified to do so, and that the Cuban government, desperate for dollars, might be trying to get a piece of the huge cancer quackery pie that is making Mexican cancer quacks filthy rich off sick Americans. Nor did *60 Minutes* subsequently report that National Cancer Institute officials reviewed the Cuban data and pronounced the "incomplete and unimpressive."

Naturally the snake oil industry and the hoax publishing industry got tremendous mileage from the program and expanded the therapeutic claims to include arthritis

and other diseases. Ever since the show aired, Lane's books and the products have been promoted with "As featured on *60 Minutes* – A Major Cancer Breakthrough" prominently emblazoned on hundreds of ads in scores of media. Wallace could not have done a better job for the massive swindle had the show been a paid infomercial. Lane and his publisher (Avery) have made millions and consumers all over the world, each spending about ten to forty dollars per day on the "recommended" dose, have wasted billions.

As more profiteers have joined the feeding frenzy the shark populations have plummeted dangerously. The rising price of the cartilage has given rise to a bovine cartilage scam. There is not even a pretense that cows don't get cancer, but the products are hyped as cheaper than the shark cartilage. I suppose if you are going to waste money on a worthless snake oil, you may as well get the cheapest one. Incidentally, when pressed about the fact that sharks do in fact get cancer, which contradicts the titles of his books, Lane said he doesn't care whether or not sharks get cancer.

Needless to say, *60 minutes* has never done an update on the industry, its profits, the environmental damage it causes, or the worthlessness of its products.

Another *60 minutes* report sensationalized very preliminary and unprofessional research on snake venoms as possible remedies for neurological disorders and arthritis, and created thousands of customers for expensive, dangerous, unapproved and worthless venom products dispensed at an illicit clinic that was eventually closed by court order.

The FDA, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and others had tried to dissuade CBS from airing the story, but they were unsuccessful. The story was aired with the suggestion that the scientists and the government were negligently reluctant to investigate a promising therapy. *60 Minutes* never told the public that legitimate researchers in the field consider the theory behind the treatment absurd and opposed wasting resources on it because much more promising research still awaited funding.

The show never did an update to inform its huge audience that subsequent studies showed the treatments to be absolutely worthless and very dangerous. It never tallied up the millions of dollars wasted by patients or the millions diverted from more important studies to snake venom studies because of public pressure generated by the pseudo-journalism.

Mike Wallace's gang did a similarly biased report that gave a big boost to peddlers of DMSO, a chemical that is absorbed through the skin and is fraudulently alleged to be a miracle cure for many diseases. *60 Minutes* also boosted sales of Catalyst-

Altered Water (CAW), an alleged miracle cure for assorted diseases. CAW was developed in the 1930s as a cleaning agent and sold as Willard's Water. Someone decided to drink it (to clean out "toxins," I suppose), word spread that it had therapeutic properties and *60 Minutes* broadcast testimonials to that effect.

Within weeks, "As seen on *60 Minutes*" appeared in ads, and sales of the product in health fraud stores soared. FDA analysis showed it was ordinary water with a little castor oil and three kinds of salt. The manufacturer was eventually forced to stop making health claims, but by then consumers had wasted millions on CAW. *60 Minutes*, of course, never reported the truth about the scam.

In 1979 *60 Minutes* gave a huge boost to notorious cancer quack Lawrence Burton and his bogus and dangerous "immuno-augmentative therapy" (IAT), which had transmitted HIV and hepatitis B to several patients. The show reported that one of Burton's patients had recovered miraculously after the treatment, but CBS did not inform the public when the man died twelve days after the broadcast.

Besides peddling panaceas, *60 Minutes* indulges in the twin sin, creating paranoia. While generating enthusiasm for worthless junk and assorted scams, the show also whips up hysteria about relatively innocuous products. For example, in 1990 it did a segment titled "Is There Poison in Your Mouth?" This was a biased story on the alleged hazards of mercury amalgam in dental fillings. A subsequent survey found that 20% of responding viewers had considered having their dental amalgam removed because of concerns over the health risks.

The hysteria generated by the show was a boon to unscrupulous dentists who make large profits removing perfectly good fillings and putting in more expensive materials. To this day the allegations against the amalgam have not been proved, but the fear remains and the practice continues.

Among the most dishonest and destructive *60 Minutes* segments ever was "A Is for Apple," broadcast in 1989. It showed an apple with a skull and crossbones superimposed on it, and began with Ed Bradley's outrageous lie, "The most potent cancer-causing agent in our food supply is a substance sprayed on apples to keep them on the trees longer and make them look better." He was referring to Alar. Children in cancer wards were shown, implying that apples with Alar had put them there.

Total hysteria followed as parents and schools stopped serving apples and their products, and even dumped large quantities. Apple growers and processors lost tens of millions of dollars; family farmers lost their farms; hundreds lost their jobs; and millions were frightened away from the health-promoting fruit. Good job, Ed!

This atrocious report was essentially a co-production of CBS with a group called the Natural Resources Defense Council, the NRDC. This group orchestrated a media extravaganza that included press conferences, talk show appearances and magazine cover stories, the purpose of which was to generate revenues for the group. Its public relations consultant David Fenton bragged that the campaign was designed so that revenue would flow back to NRDC from the public. And it did, to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Ed Bradley did not tell viewers that the only evidence NRDC had was a single study of mice fed Alar at doses half a million time greater than common human ingestion and even then only one mouse developed one tumor; that only 15 percent of America's apple trees were sprayed with Alar; and that Americans ingest far more carcinogens, naturally present or generated by cooking, in dozens of common foods such as coffee, hamburgers, peanut butter, mushrooms, black pepper, basil, ordinary toast, and many others.

In 1994 CBS broadcast *Cries from the Heart*, which gave credence to a practice called facilitated communication (FC), an alleged major breakthrough in the treatment of autistic children. The theory is that autism is a disorder of muscle coordination or disassociation, not intellect. In this system the child sits at a typewriter or word processor with the facilitator holding his wrist or sleeve poised above the keyboard. The child then types out eloquent statements, even poems, though he has never learned to read and write and usually communicates almost nothing.

In reality FC is a fraudulent or delusional method akin to playing with an Ouija board, with the letters actually selected, subconsciously we hope, by the facilitators. The therapists and professors promoting the method reap financial rewards while obstructing or ignoring scientific studies that expose it as bunk. It is a cruel exploitation of handicapped children and their families that can only end in bitter disappointment.

It can also lead to tragedy when the child types out graphic details of parents who raped him or her. In one such case the child was removed from the home of loving parents while authorities investigated. An astute judge commissioned a proper scientific test and determined that the FC process is quackery and that the filth had come from the mind of the facilitator.

Another CBS gem was its pro-creationist pseudo-documentary *The Incredible Discovery of Noah's Ark*, produced for CBS by Sun International Pictures. The film was based on a hoax perpetrated by an actor named George Jammal who made up a story about discovering a piece of wood from Noah's Ark in the

mountains of Turkey. The wood was actually a piece of pine from a railroad track in Long Beach that he had hardened by frying it on a kitchen stove. Sun producers made no effort to check his story (he had never been to Turkey), and they turned down offers to have the wood carbon dated. In spite of the patent absurdity of the claim and the lack of evidence for it, CBS aired the show.

Two years earlier CBS had broadcast *Ancient Secrets of the Bible*, which featured Christian creationist pseudoscientists presenting “evidence” for the reality of biblical miracles. Jammal says he hoaxed CBS because “They’re foisting religious propaganda on Americans and making them believe it’s true. So I hoaxed the hoaxers.” He came forward with the truth when he heard that CBS was proceeding with “more phony, religious, documentary pseudoscience programs. That’s when my volcano erupted.” (*Skeptical Inquirer*, Winter 1994)

CBS never apologized for airing the phony documentary and never did an on-air correction. Worse, it went ahead and aired another shoddy Sun production, *Mysteries of the Ancient World*, which promotes a lot of rubbish about Nostradamus, the Bermuda Triangle, the Shroud of Turin and the like.

CBS promotes quackery not just on *60 minutes* and *48 Hours*, but even on the *CBS Evening News*. For example, on June 16, 1997, Dan Rather and crew gave us the usual promotional tour of alternative medicine with the usual obfuscation and distortion. Evidence-based, scientific medicine was referred to as Western and tradition. In fact, good scientific medicine comes from all over the world and all cultures are capable of leaning to use its powerful tools and techniques. And there is nothing traditional about scientific medicine since it strives to base practices on the latest good evidence rather than tradition.

On the other hand, Rather called alternative medicine “not so traditional,” when, in fact, many of its modes, such as acupuncture, herbalism and shamanism, are traditional folk medical systems. Often their long tradition is the only rationale for their treatments and rituals. The media have told us a thousand times that acupuncture is 3,000 or 5,000 or 8,000 years old (they can’t decide), so it must work.

A special news report like this wouldn’t be complete without a stop in the Land of Oz, Columbia Presbyterian Hospital’s Center for Complementary Medicine. Here patients undergoing surgery are treated to massage and relaxation session beforehand, and subjected to a battery of silly mumbo-jumbo in the operating rooms by Mehmet Oz, MD and his New Age cohorts. Dr. Oz implied that the adjuncts are Eastern and said he is adopting them because Western medicine is too limited.

Rather did not point out that almost all of their methods – the massage, hypnosis, reflexology, (non)therapeutic (non)touch and music on headphones during surgery are Western in origin.

Dr. Oz repeated a propaganda refrain often heard from alternative medicine shills. He said that Western medicine (presumably he meant scientific medicine) rejects therapies if it can't figure out how they work. This is false. Scientific medicine accepts therapies if they are proven safe and effective, even if their exact mechanism of action is unknown. It rejects therapies that have been shown to be unsafe or ineffective; it considers unproved therapies to be experimental; and it holds that the latter should not be marketed until they are shown to be safe and effective.

Dr. Oz and his friends think it's okay to sell whatever is popular with the public because it's fun to believe in or because they have been indoctrinated by industry and media propagandists.

Just days later *CBS News* gave us more such propaganda. We were shown a natural medical clinic with happy naturopaths administering natural therapies to happy patients. There was no discussion of why acupuncture and daily doses of vitamin C equal to several months RDA are “natural.” Or why nutrition therapy for heart disease and other ailments was lumped in with alternative medicine, even though it has been increasingly integrated into standard care since the 1950s.

A common mantra, repeated in this report, is that alternative medicine is being integrated into the health care system because the public demands it. In fact, the *New England Journal of Medicine* article usually cited in such reports lumps massage, relaxation techniques and other noncontroversial modes in with acupuncture, homeopathy and the like. This distortion of language distorts the data and allows fringe medicine, cult medicine and quackery to piggyback on massage and relaxation, which are completely different.

*CBS News* didn't inquire into something perhaps even more important, namely, so what if quackery is patient driven? Do we really want mob rule where science should guide us? If we have to accept scams and superstitions into the health care system based on their popularity, then the loudest demagogues with the cleverest hoaxes will rise to the top. Dozens of unscientific healing cults and their lobbies are already lining up for access to private and public health care dollars, and many have already gotten in.

If popularity is to determine who gets in you can bet that our horoscopes will become part of our medical records, and hospitals and clinics will hire astrologers to be sure we all receive truly holistic care. They and their deluded clients will

form powerful lobbies to secure a piece of the health care pie, an entitlement that will grow in perpetuity.

Of course, chiropractic has already blazed a wide path, practically a superhighway, that healing cults can use to cruise to legitimacy and access to the public trough. It showed that failure in the courts of science is no barrier to success in the minds of the media, the public and the legislators. Persistent lobbying, campaign donating and deceptive mass propagandizing can bring enormous rewards. Acupuncturists and naturopaths now speed along this highway and settle all over the country.

Now there is little to keep the homeopaths, Ayurvedists, Reiki healers, chakra balancers, aura enhancers, mega-enema therapists, iridologists, and other popular pretenders out of our pockets. But we can have all of them only if we want to double or triple our health care costs and decrease quality of care.

The CBS story, like all the others on the subject, didn't raise these questions. The Washington State clinic featured in the program has since started accepting welfare patients. Don't expect *CBS News* or any other network to investigate the true significance of this trend for all of us.

A comment by Dan Rather illustrates the abysmal ignorance of journalists regarding the alternative medicines they so enthusiastically promote. He was looking into the return of mysticism and superstition in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He gave examples of belief in assorted mystical healing techniques, and emphasized that the Rasputin-cult type phenomenon is different from America's (presumably sober and rational) interest in alternative medicines such as homeopathy.

Rather clearly has no understanding that homeopathy, with its vibrational essences, constitutional remedies, water with a memory, increasing potency with decreasing concentration, and contradiction of well-established principles of pharmacology, chemistry and physiology, is every bit as mystical and delusional as anything ever espoused by Rasputin.

So even the great Dan Rather has been indoctrinated by the industry and the media. His ignorance, incompetence, and complete helplessness when confronted with alternative medicine myths, delusions, lies and frauds is typical of today's journalists.

### **NBC's Great Whoppers**

NBC Television has been no slouch in the media war against reason, and its promotion of New Age and alternative medicine claptrap is second to none. The "professionals" at NBC can be especially proud of one of the all-time great media

hoaxes, a two-hour whopper titled *Cured! Secrets of Alternative Medicine* which aired in 1995. An ad in *TV Guide* screams “*Miracle Cures! Watching this show could save your life!*” It shows God’s giant hand reaching through the clouds to touch a man as lightening crackles in the night sky.

This fake documentary featured fabricated accounts of miracle cures from the world of alternative medicine with actors playing patients cured by herbs, acupuncture, homeopathy and the like. Producer Paul Klein says he based the stories on accounts he gleaned from unspecified popular periodicals and unnamed people. In this documentary all the particulars are kept secret, so there is no way to verify who was really cured of what by what, yet viewers are encouraged to let quacks play with their lives based on the “true” stories. The show was essentially a two-hour fraudulent commercial for fraudulent medicine.

The blatant lying propaganda didn’t stop with the phony case histories. One scene showed Hippocrates praising the wonders of homeopathy, though he lived in ancient Greece and homeopathy was dreamed up in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Germany. In another segment we are told that a quarter of all pharmaceutical drugs come from plants, but the real number is less than 100 out of more than 6,000, less than 2%.

Two skeptical experts, Jack Raso, RD, and Saul Green, PhD, were contacted for interviews for the show and were told that it would be a fair examination of alternative medicine. However, almost all of their comments were edited out, and the audience was not told that they are members of the Board of Directors of the National Council Against Health Fraud, nor how to contact them. But viewers were told how to contact fraudulent alternative practitioners who scam sick people for a living.

This remarkable hoax represents the epitome of the postmodern art of lying about health matters as a form of entertainment. It illustrates the cynicism that is a way of life for those in the industry and the utter contempt they have for the public. In an interview with *Forbes MediaCritic* (Winter 1995) producer Klein didn’t even try to defend the show as factual. He said he thinks some of the therapies promoted in the show are “shit” but “We weren’t doing an educational program. We were doing it as entertainment.”

Here we have it again. It originated with the tabloid papers, but this rationalization for lying has become universal with the postmodern media. It’s okay to lie to the public, even about something as important as health care, as long as the lies are entertaining. It’s okay to present shit as ambrosia as long as it’s fun for the viewers and profitable for the network.

Similarly, NBC's Roz Weinman, vice-president of standards and practices, was irritated at *MediaCritic's* scrutiny. She said, "There didn't need to be any factual accounts because the program wasn't about conventional medicine." Here we have the official word from the ethics chief of a media superpower. She admits that there are categories of subjects about which NBC considers it okay to lie, and that one of these categories is amazing cures for deadly diseases.

NBC should have told us that long ago, and it should frequently remind and warn viewers about this cynical policy. Moreover, it should release the full list of categories of subjects about which they feel free to lie. Why should we be left to guess?

In February, 1999, NBC perpetrated a similar hoax with its two-hour production *Confirmation: the Hard Evidence of Aliens among Us?* It was heavily hyped for days before the broadcast and the voice-over did not have a question mark at the end of the announcement. When aired, "confirmation" was in extra-large print and the question mark was very small.

The host-narrator's voice and tone were like those for *Outer Limits* and eerie music was always in the background. The gist of the story was not new. Thousands of people have been abducted by space aliens, raped, bred with, experimented on, and had tracking and controlling devices implanted in their bodies. The government conspiracy to hide the truth about all this has continued unabated since Roswell.

Science fiction writer, self-proclaimed abductee and admitted liar Whitley Strieber was an executive producer of the program. The featured "experts" included Strieber; Jerome Clark, whose trashy little magazines have long promoted the reality of every silly myth and lie from visiting aliens to werewolves; and Budd Hopkins, the cynical self-appointed psychologist who makes a living spreading the delusion of abduction by hypnotizing gullible, disturbed and vulnerable people and implanting the lies in their minds. These, of course, are the only real implants in these people.

To provide a tiny semblance of objectivity, the show included very brief comments from skeptics Philip J. Klass, moonwalker Buz Aldrin, paranormal investigator Joe Nickell, an astronomer, a clinical psychologist, and a film expert. Between them they were given a total of about 220 seconds of the two-hour show. Several individuals who had claimed to have been abducted were identified as "alien abductees," not as alleged alien abductees or victims of delusions.

One of the most blatant lies in the program was about a policeman in a patrol car who says his car shut off just as a strange bright light appeared directly above it. He got out and looked up. The camera pans up to the object hovering over his car.

It was a stereotypical flying saucer just like the ones in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, with flashing lights, windows and rotating parts. When it flew off his car started up and the lights went back on while he was still standing outside. But at the end of the interview he says, "I'm not saying what I saw was a spaceship from outer space."

If he explicitly denied saying that, why is that what we were shown? I would wager he also never said the thing hovered right over his car for 30 seconds or that the car started back up before he got back in. But that is what we were told and shown. NBC should explain how this program is any different from the fantastic lies regularly presented as news in such tabloids as *Weekly World News*. The simple truth is, the whole program was a hoax and a lie, and in many way similar to *Cured*.

After the program NBC made us an "exclusive offer!"

"At last we may have hard evidence of aliens among us!" For \$24.95 plus shipping and handling we can have a copy of the program and a T-shirt. Both the shirt and the video box have a picture of the usual alien with huge eyes and a tiny mouth and ears. More lying for fun and profit.

Like many programs that promote millennial madness, *Confirmed* made a point of telling us that a great many people believe their message. Half of all Americans believe alien abductions occur, we are told. This is according to a CNN-Times poll. And, the narrator says, a Roper poll suggests that 800,000 Americans believe that they have been abducted by aliens. This is similar to the shows that promote alternative medicine, then quote polls to show us how trendy it is to believe. The media are very proud of their power to deceive and indoctrinate. They saturate the airwaves, cables and millions of acres of paper with preposterous but profitable lies.

Naturally many people believe the lies because they are fun to believe and rarely contradicted. Then the media use indoctrinated ones to say, look, so many people believe that it must be true. So it snowballs. Now we have a huge population brainwashed into believing that their neighbors may be alien zombies, that telephone psychoids can tell them their futures, that the movements of the planets affects the stock market, and that cancer can be cured by wishful thinking, homeopathy, herbs and chiropractic.

What else is on NBC's okay-to-lie-about list? Here is another clue. Its *Unsolved Mysteries*, hosted by Robert Stack, is a long-running and prolific source of highly-biased reports promoting the reality of ghosts, haunted houses, telepathy, astrology, miracle healings aura massage, alternative medicine, and miscellaneous

paranormal phenomena. The sensationalist and promotional nature of the program is obvious, and the dishonesty of the show is apparent upon examination.

An example is provided by Joe Nickell, who was asked by a producer of the show to examine alleged miracle photos containing faces of Jesus and Mary. He explained how all the photos had come about and showed how anyone can produce such effects. But when the story aired most of his comments had been cut out and viewers were left with the impression that the photos really could be miracles.

One of the most disturbing episodes of *Unsolved Mysteries* documented Stack's meeting with Budd Hopkins, whose bestselling books about UFO abductions have made him a fortune. Hopkins claims to have discovered through hypnosis that thousands of people have been abducted and taken aboard extraterrestrial crafts where they were drugged, probed with needles, cut open, raped, sodomized, had reproductive and other tissues removed, and had devices implanted. Most have been abused this way repeatedly and many are in regular telepathic contact with the evil ETs, some even under their control.

Stack had no problem with these wild tales, though they have not been verified by medical doctors, law enforcement officials or bedmates at the time of the crime. He sounded like Walter Winchell might sound narrating *The New Age Untouchables* and describing a rash of kidnappings by an Intergalactic Mafia. He had one of Hopkins' star abductees describe her experiences of being abducted and experimented on.

She concluded, "I'm not lying. I could have been dreaming, but I'm not lying." Ignoring the young woman's cogent observation that she might have been dreaming, Stack turned to Hopkins and gravely asked him, "Why are they here?" Hopkins answered, just as gravely, "Ongoing genetic experiments. It's an extraordinary phenomenon."

In reality, the extraordinary phenomenon here is that these two seemingly sane and sober adults sat around and calmly discussed this wild fantasy as though it were reality, and millions of people watched and believed. If this is not media-induced mass psychosis, I don't know what is. Rational examination of the epidemic of UFO abductions makes it clear that the experiences are dreams, delusions, fantasies, hallucinations, and often fabrications, and that the epidemic is driven by those in the UFO publishing industry, the UFO abduction therapy industry and the mass media.

In a segment about the Roswell incident *Unsolved Mysteries* suppressed the truth in the same way as *48 Hours* had (see above). It interviewed expert Philip Klass, but cut out all except a few seconds of his comments and didn't show or mention

the once-secret government documents that prove there was no UFO crash in Roswell.

Another NBC pseudoscience classic, aired in 1996, was its documentary *The Mysterious Origins of Man*. It was narrated by Charlton Heston, and its claims are based on Hare Krishna theology and cosmology. The main thesis is that modern Homo sapiens have been on earth for millions of years and even coexisted with dinosaurs. The myth of Darwinian evolution is shattered and Antarctica is shown to really be Atlantis. Only fringe archeologists and pseudoscientists were interviewed and they presented myth, conjecture, distorted data and lies to bolster their case.

Bill Cote, co-writer, co-producer and director of the show, responded to criticism from scientists by saying they are narrow-minded and sleazy priests of scientism who are threatened by new ideas and use dirty tricks to suppress them. He apparently believes that new (or, in this case, old and recycled) ideas, no matter how great the evidence against them, should be blindly embraced and presented to the public as proven or plausible simply because they are intriguing and fun to believe. He likened himself to Socrates, “the gadfly that bites the horse’s ass to keep it moving.” Here we have another ignorant, arrogant and viciously antiscientific postmodern pseudo-journalist. This crusader at least has the insight to recognize himself as an insect who makes unintelligible noises and has strange fetishes.

Another NBC atrocity was the tabloid talk show series *The Other Side*, a circus of lies and delusions coming so fast and furious that it was dazzling – and nauseating. It promoted the reality of not only ghosts, poltergeists and the like, but also a wide variety of fraudulent alternative medicines, snake oils and miracle healing gadgets and rituals. Exploitative and dangerous episodes included one titled “*Using Alternative Medicine to Keep Children Healthy*.” A chiropractor proved years before to be a dangerous quack and successfully sued for fraud, was said to be able to cure children with Down’s syndrome. A “doctor” who only at the end of the show was briefly identified as not an MD but an acupuncturist called vaccinations dangerous poisons.

In other episodes an acupressurist offered to cure audience members of allergies to antibiotics (which can be lethal); and people were said to have been cured of cancer by diet and meditation. The show was hosted by “Dr.” Will Miller, and everyone called him that, but we were never told what kind of doctor he is. In any case, it was all apparently too much for him and he quit the show, which mercifully perished within a few months of the first episode.

NBC's habit of lying for fun and profit goes way back. In 1977 it broadcast *Exploring the Unknown*, a 90-minute pseudo-documentary narrated by Burt Lancaster. The show promoted the reality of levitation, psychokinesis, psychic photography, psychic healing and the dangerous and very lucrative scam of psychic surgery. These things were presented as facts and alleged scientific experts supported this view. Real scientists and skeptics were not presented and the audience was not told that most scientists consider it all a lot of rubbish. NBC broadcast another pseudo-documentary in 1979 called *The Amazing World of Psychic Phenomena*, which was little more than a transparent hoax.

Other nonsense promoted by NBC as real includes: the pseudoscience of character determination by face reading, which was endorsed by the brilliant investigators at *Dateline* after they ran a worthless test; the curse of King Tut's tomb, which was touted in a pseudo-documentary loaded with errors and distortions; and a bogus perpetual-motion machine which, according to NBC, generates 4,000 watts of electricity. There was no mention of why NBC's parent company, General Electric, was not pursuing research in this area.

It is not surprising that NBC's web site features a link to an astrology service, front and center. Click on it and you get a virtual circus of superstition: Tarot readings, lucky numbers, I Ching, and Chinese astrology, as well as the usual Western astrology with pages and pages of nonsense and gobbledygook. The site is cosponsored by Hearst publications including *Redbook*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Country Living's Healthy Living*.

Even the supposedly sober and rational business and finance reporters of CNBC, an NBC subsidiary, promote New Age humbug in a deceptive manner. For example, on his show *Street Talk* Ron Insana spoke with one of his regular guests, a technical analyst name Jerry Favors, who uses astrology to predict movements in the stock market. In this case he predicted, on the basis of celestial events, that in about ten days, on July 24, 1998, give or take two days, the Dow Jones Industrial Average would hit an all-time high, then plunge sharply. He was flat-out wrong. From the time he spoke to July 24 the Dow dropped over 300 points. But when Insana interviewed him two weeks after the predicted event he didn't ask Favors about the failed prophecy.

The market bottomed on October 8 and started climbing steadily. On October 16 Favors told Insana that interest rate lowering by the Federal Reserve would not help and the market would take a dive after topping around October 22. As it turned out, the Fed easing sparked a spectacular race to all-time highs from mid-October through April. The astrology-based prediction could not have been more wrong.

During the big correction (or short bear market) from late August to mid-October Favors was predicting, again on astrological bases, a second leg down in late October and advised staying out of the market. Even as the market made a steady climb from its depths on October 8 he held firm and his followers missed the greatest bull market run-up in history. His nonsensical advice cost them millions of dollars. Still, he is a monthly guest on CNBC, and no mention is ever made of his enormous mistake or the absurdity of believing that the state of the heavens affects the stock market.

On CNBC's *Market Wrap* in August, 1998, Sue Herrera and Tyler Mathisen presented astrologer Arch Crawford who writes a newsletter featuring astrological stock market forecasting. The interview was saved for the end of the hour and was hyped as least six times during the show. Like many other analysts, Crawford predicted a crash, similar to the one in 1987, after Labor Day, September 7. But while others pointed to the financial mess in Asia and growing signs of global recession, Crawford saw the cause in the heavens. Specifically, he urged investors to "run for the hills" because on September 4 Mars would be opposite Uranus and on September 6 the second lunar eclipse of the year would occur. He predicted a bottom on October 29-31. By then, of course, the market was in full recovery from its October 8 bottom.

Mathisen closed the segment with, "Who knows? Maybe it really works. Just as good as any other methods, I guess." Of course! We have known since ancient times that eclipses are harbingers of doom. Like Favors, Crawford cost his clients and followers millions of dollars, but the CNBC reporters pretend to remain oblivious. On New Year's Eve Sue Herrera asked him, in all seriousness, "Astrologically, how does 1999 look to you?" He predicted a market bottom around January 20-22 and recovery in mid-April. Something about a new moon squared with Saturn. But during these days the NASDAQ and the S&P 500 continued their amazing climbs in one of the greatest speculative manias of all time.

These examples illustrate the sacred cow status of astrology, the enormous reluctance that even seemingly rational media people have to facing the truth and telling the truth about astrology.

I should point out that the astrologers were unusually bearish compared to most CNBC guests, who seem to believe that stock market cycles have been repealed and the current extreme valuations will keep growing forever. I suspect that by the time you read this we will be in a bear market and there may have been a severe crash. The current situation is similar to historic speculative manias that ended very

badly. The US stock market crash of 1929, for example, and the Japanese market crash of 1990.

The prices of the major internet-related stocks are especially ridiculous and reminiscent of the Great Dutch Tulip Mania of the seventeenth century, as described in Charles Mackay's book *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*. In fact, market skeptics often refer to them as tulip stocks and internet stocks. Moreover, the internet, along with the Fed's easy money policy, has greatly facilitated the process of turning the stock market into a giant national casino.

Despite the obvious dangers facing the millions of Americans now playing in this casino, the reporting and commentary on CNBC and CNN are strongly biased on the bullish side. Why? Just look at the ads and see who pays the salaries: mostly brokerage firms holding out the promise of spectacular wealth and a life of luxury to those who trade online in high volume. A severe market correction or crash is inevitable at some point. Likewise we will eventually come to our senses about alternatoid medicine, UFOs and the paranormal. It will be interesting to see whether these delusional bubbles all pop around the same time.

CNBC also runs infomercials for various forms of quackery. One features a chiroquack peddling his book that shows how to cure heart disease, diabetes and other diseases by alkalinizing the blood through diet, relaxation and laughter. He claims that saliva pH is a measure of emotional state and this can be used to monitor our health. Another infomercial promotes Slim Patch, a homeopathic ointment that is rubbed on the wrist to reduce weight and remedy obesity. On its show *Best of Great Stuff* an oxygen-dispensing scam was promoted, complete with deceptive medical claims by the lay proprietor and without comment from a physician or other expert.

NBC obviously has no qualms about lying about health, medicine, UFOs, the paranormal, astrology, and the stock market. This leads me to believe they will lie about anything if they believe it is in their interest to do so.

### [Leeza's Lunacy](#)

Leeza Gibbons is fond of fringe medicine and the paranormal, and her show *Leeza* has promoted quackery on several occasions. One episode was titled "*Miracle Healing or Medical Hoax?*" This title and the presence of two token skeptics in the audience provided a veneer of objectivity, but the show was clearly promotional. A chiropractor who supposedly performs miraculous healings of serious diseases, even cancer and paralysis, was give a free ride and hundreds of thousands of

dollars' worth of promotion. Now the sick and desperate will be line up to see him for years.

Bee sting therapy for MS, acupuncture for migraines, garlic for ear infections, and digestive enzymes were the other featured attractions. The skeptics, one a medical doctor and one a consumer-rights attorney, were given about thirty seconds each during the hour. Leeza made no effort to verify the miraculous medical claims made. She didn't do a simple test of the chiropractor's claims about healing energy emanating from his hands, energy that supposedly causes warmth, tingling and other sensations.

Though Leeza did say that she isn't recommending the products and services, and that they haven't been proved effective, she was much more enthusiastic than skeptical, and she failed to ask a single intelligent question. The naturopath on the panel demonstrated the wonders of digestive enzymes by showing two bowls of cooked oatmeal, one with added enzyme. The latter appeared half digested and this proved, said the "doctor", that taking the enzymes with meals saves the body energy so more energy is available for daily activities. Since "everyone has digestive problems," we should all add the enzymes to each of our meals. Several bottles of enzymes and other such products were shown up close for several seconds.

Leeza said, "Amazing. If makes sense. It makes sense. Can you come back with a whole studio full of stuff?" she didn't invite a real nutritionist or physician to reply to this snake oil huckstering. She didn't ask why our bodies have evolved such an inefficient digestive system and how we have survived all these millennia. She didn't inquire into possible financial dealings the naturopath might have with the companies whose products he and she were giving thousands of dollars' worth of publicity to. But she did offer to do a bigger and better promotion at the first opportunity.

The acupuncturist, who had been treating a migraine sufferer for several weeks, was shown placing needles near her eyebrow, then holding her wrists in his hands. He said he is "looking for toxins in your system. It looks like there's a toxin related to what's going on in your lungs." She had not mentioned lung symptoms, but his pulse diagnosis detected not only lung-related toxins (whatever that means), but problems with digestion and hormones that "might be related to your headaches."

Leeza didn't invite a real doctor to comment on this method of diagnosis, which is nothing more than preposterous quackery. She didn't inquire into why state governments have legalized and licensed this fraud, and why federal tax dollars guarantee loans so students can learn to run Chinese medicine scams on the public.

Another *Leeza* show featured fraudulent alternative cancer therapies such as diet, shark cartilage, (non)therapeutic (non)touch, and hypnotic regression to infancy and past lives. She spoke with a young mother of four who had breast cancer, expressed sympathy and support, and said, “So you’ll be watching this show today for all kinds of alternatives,” and the woman agreed.

The main guest on the panel was Lorraine Day, MD, an orthopedic surgeon who claims to have rejected surgery and radiation for breast cancer, and cured herself by changing her diet, drinking lots of water and exercising.

No one reminded the audience about another young and attractive physician who had opted for a dietary cure for cancer. A decade ago Dr. Anthony Sattilaro wrote books and appeared on many talk shows praising the wonders of macrobiotics, which had cured him of prostate cancer. When he died of the disease the media fell silent and the public never learned the truth.

Then Leeza let a hypnotist on the panel promote himself and his book, *Answer Cancer – Miraculous Healings Explained*. It tells us that he practices past-life and early-life regressions as a cancer therapy. He said that a fetus can detect whether it is wanted and loved, and that if it is not it is likely to develop cancer later in life. The cancer can be magically cured by exposing the psychological cause.

He treats only terminal cancer patients and has a very high success rate, he says. A tape was played of him performing the therapy the day before on a woman now in the audience, a young mother with metastatic breast cancer. While New Age music plays in the background he takes her back to age three. She cries about the father who was never there for her, then beats up on a pillow.

Leeza didn’t ask for documentation and medical verification of his success rate, but she did ask the woman whether she feels any differently. She said her hip hurts less today and Leeza said, “And you think it was the hypnosis? Wow! So we have that story.” She seemed satisfied that the hypnotist had proved his supernatural claims.

Leeza then moved on to promote the shark cartilage scam, as if the media hadn’t already given it several million dollars’ worth of free promotion. She had William Lane, the inventor of the scam, explain his theory and promote the product, then she spoke to Lisa, another audience member with metastatic breast cancer. This woman had undergone chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant, but she also took shark cartilage. Leeza asked only about the latter. “So you think it helped?” Lisa replied, “Yes, definitely, I feel wonderful.” That was good enough for Leeza, and she moved on to plug the energy healer.

Susan Brown “treats cancer by laying on hands,” according to the caption. Actually, she practices (non)therapeutic (non)touch and lays her hands not on the person but on his or her aura. This is the mythical field that she claims surrounds us all and can be massaged for both diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. She demonstrated on a cancer patient from the audience. It all made perfect sense to Leeza.

The lone rationalist in this charade was a physician spokesman for the American Cancer Society. Mitchell Karlan, MD, made a valiant effort, but got only about 90 seconds of the hour to make his points. He didn't get a chance to tell Leeza that her little demonstrations of cancer patients momentarily feeling better was a deception that plays into the hands of quacks. There was no discussion of the massive waste, the billions of dollars Americans spend on cancer fraud every year, and the uncounted victims who die because quacks deceived them. Nor had Leeza invited victims of cancer fraud or their relatives to tell their stories.

In 1996, a quarter century after James Randi had exposed Uri Geller as a charlatan, Leeza turned her show over to Geller and let him run his same tired old scam. He bent spoons, fixed watches, and pretended that his cheap tricks were real paranormal powers. Leeza didn't have a magician on hand to duplicate the feats and expose the trickery. No skepticism was expressed and the show was little more than an infomercial for Geller's *Mindpower Kit* which consists of a book, an audiotape and a quartz crystal.

This kind of mindless performance by Leeza is not surprising considering that her guru is Tony Robbins, the miracle healer turned motivational guru whose ideas on psychology, nutrition and health are sheer lunacy. He has said, for example, that milk is cow pus, germs don't cause disease, and that in less than an hour he can cure neuroses, phobias, and autism, and even bring people out of comas. Leeza has appeared on Robbins' infomercials, as has Geller.

A 1997 Leeza show on UFOs was typical of the genre. The panel of guests included three clearly delusional and disturbed individuals who claimed to have been abducted by space aliens, a hypnotherapist who specializes in exploiting such people by putting the delusions into their heads, a writer who makes a living promoting the reality of alien visitations, and a lone skeptic.

One abductee claimed that he mates with aliens and has fathered 200 alien babies. Another claims she gave birth to alien babies and held them in her arms before the aliens took them away. The skeptic was given only a couple minutes to try to bring some sanity to the proceedings.

An episode featuring phony spirit reader Rosemary Altea had Leeza enthralled. Altea spoke to people in the audience who wanted her to communicate with their deceased loved ones. She told one couple that their little boy is now an angel with wings and he's standing beside her now, and so on. Leeza chimed in that chills were running up and down her spine.

One *Leeza* show is especially notable because it demonstrates that she is not only a gullible New Age cultist, but that she is also dishonest to the core. The show, titled *Family Reunions: Psychic Predictions Come True*, aired in December 1997, and was an outrageous fraud. At the start Leeza asked whether psychics can predict reunions of long-separated loved ones. She then orchestrated three on-stage surprise reunions, and used each one to promote psychics and make it appear they had something to do with the happy event.

In the first case, a woman was about to be reunited with her son, who she had given up at birth thirty years before. After telling her she was about to see him, Leeza prolonged the moment almost sadistically, relishing her power over the emotions of the woman, her son and the audience. Then she asked, "Have you ever consulted a psychic about this?" The woman answered yes. Leeza said, "REALLY?!" as if this had any significance. She didn't ask for details. Then she allowed the tearful reunion on the stage for millions to watch. Chalk one up for the psychics!

The next story, she said, "fulfills a psychic's prediction made in 1982." Two sisters were seeking a third they hadn't seen in twenty years. Leeza reunited them on the show and as everyone enjoyed the moment she brought up the psychic connection. One of the women said that a carnival psychic had predicted she would find her sisters through television. Leeza said, "Kind of eerie isn't it?"

Leeza then spoke with a mother-daughter team who started a search company together. They had been hired by Leeza to find the sisters (above) and they were responsible for the reunions on the show. But Leeza only wanted to talk about psychics, and suggested that the women "probably have a little psychic edge going for them." She asked whether they ever suggest to clients that they use psychics to help find loved ones. They looked uncomfortable. Politely refraining from saying, "Don't be an idiot," one answered that people sometimes ask for help because a psychic told them to search, and added that it's good to follow up on hunches.

The caption under each of the detectives said, "Believes psychic impressions can aid in searches," even though neither had said that. Leeza just made it up. When it turned out that two of the sisters they found had lived forty miles apart, Leeza chimed in, "There's that psychic connection again," without explaining what was

psychic about it. If they had been reunited from ten thousand miles apart Leeza would, no doubt, have used the great distance as evidence of the amazing psychic connection. The woman is obsessed and dishonest. She went to commercial with, “Next we’ll consider whether a psychic can help you.”

Leeza came back and closed the show spending three minutes promoting “a real psychic,” Sheila Hite, and her book *Love, Money, and Power*. Hite said that detectives don’t help much, but she didn’t offer to stack her record up against that of the mother-daughter detective team that had made the show possible and who were sitting right there. Leeza asked Hite how one avoids rip-off artists. Hite replied that you have to use your sixth sense, but she didn’t elaborate. Leeza didn’t ask why, if we’re all psychic enough to do this, we would have to hire a psychic for anything.

Leeza then went to a woman in the audience who was seeking family members, and suggested she consult both the detectives and the psychic. The woman asked only to meet with the detectives after the show, and only when pressed by Leeza did she agree to also meet with the psychic. About a minute from the end Leeza told the audience how to contact the psychic, but said nothing about contacting the detectives.

Leeza likes to brag that she has exposed bogus dating services, get-rich scams, and funeral parlor rip-offs, but this show was little more than a fraudulent infomercial for a fraudulent service. It could have been done without a single reference to psychics or paranormal powers, but Leeza made these the central theme.

Throughout the show she promoted psychics and their expensive scams without presenting a scrap of evidence that they can help. She showed no interest in how the detectives work and, in fact, interrupted and chided a man in the audience who asked about their methods. “Come on, that’s such a guy thing. All the women in the audience are on a different track and he wants to know about DNA.”

Without the *women* detectives Leeza would not have been able to bask in the glow of the happy reunions and take credit for them, but she gave all the glory to the psychics. What little credit she gave to the detectives was for their psychic edge, which she fabricated, not for their intelligence and hard work.

Leeza rigged the show to deceive her audience into thinking psychics are genuine. She demonstrated in this show and many others that she is either not very bright, or she is cynical and corrupt. Does she really believe the rot she promotes, or is there some kind of payola involved? Or both?

In a sense a form of payola drives all the broadcast and cable industries’ promotion of psychic fraud. Just as popular magazines carry articles that are thinly disguised

promotions of products or industries overtly advertised, so the TV talkers' relentless and shameless propagandizing is surely a bonus for their networks' partnership in theft with the telephone psychic scammers.

In any case, one can only pity the child Leeza was so visibly bearing, and be apprehensive for his or her future. Will she grow up a true believer in a demon-haunted world: will she be cheerfully airheaded like her mother and believe that it's okay to lie for fun and profit, and be a stooge for the quackery mafia?

In November, 1997, Leeza featured a pet psychic who looks at photos of lost pets and tells what fate befell them. Here was a perfect opportunity to test a psychic's powers. Simply show photos of an animal whose current whereabouts and condition are known and ask the psychic to tell us about them. Was Leeza really unable to recognize this chance? I don't think so. I think she knew she could have done such a test but chose not to. Is this not deception? Is it not lying? Is it not fraud?

### **The ABCs of Mickey Mouse Journalism**

Dr. Timothy Johnson was medical reporter and editor for ABC Television for many years, and he used to do consistently excellent work for *ABC News*, for *20/20*, and for *Good Morning America (GMA)*. Unfortunately, all that changed in the early 1990s when a new house doctor, San Francisco area physician Nancy Snyderman, appeared on *GMA* and her role has rapidly expanded while Johnson's has shrunk. Younger, prettier, and firmly in the pocket of the alternative medicine industry, she was a better match for then-host Joan Lunden, a certified New Age true believer.

Snyderman first came to my attention in 1993 when ABC started hyping an upcoming *GMA* weeklong series on alternative medicine. I watched the series and I was appalled by the misinformation and uncritical promotion of quackery it presented. It could have been an infomercial scripted by the manufacturers of miscellaneous herbal drugs and homeopathic remedies, as well as the dubious professions of naturopathy and traditional Chinese medicine. They're all wonderful because they've been used for a long time. Case closed.

She also did a fawning interview with Dr. Andrew Weil, the Tim Leary of alternative medicine. She didn't tell her viewers that the vast majority of physicians and medical researchers who have examined the methods consider most of so-called alternative medicine to be either delusional or fraudulent.

I faxed the producer and Dr. Snyderman a detailed protest of the deceptive series and asked her to set up a brief debate between Dr. Weil and me. I especially

wanted him to demonstrate his claim that one can eliminate the odor of raw garlic from the mouth by merely wishing it to disappear. This would put his mind-body magic to a simple test. I wrote:

Since you have given a blanket endorsement to alternative medicine, please tell us if you favor the following: Laetrile for cancer cure and prevention? Megavitamins prescribed by health fraud store clerks for serious illnesses? Herbal drugs that supposedly “cleanse the blood” but are toxic and cause serious liver diseases? Do you believe that chiropractic manipulations can cure systemic diseases, as the propaganda in their offices claims? Or that acupuncture treatments can cure AIDS, cancer, obesity, and other diseases? Do you favor the chronic candida theory, which has been rejected by medical experts?

Do you recommend Roberts Atkins’ high-fat diet cure for obesity, diabetes, and heart disease? Or Pearson and Shaw’s fifty pills of megavitamins and prescription drugs to ward off aging? Should we all have our dental amalgam fillings removed to cure and prevent arthritis, MS and migraines? How about homeopathy and glandulars? Do you diagnose illnesses with iridology? Or by feeling and analyzing the twelve pulses? Or maybe you prefer astrological medicine and crystal healing.

Promoters of fraudulent alternative medicine get nothing but positive coverage from the media, while the skeptics and rationalists are silenced and censored. The American public is being led to believe that there is a cornucopia of wonderful cures being kept from them. One would think a medical doctor would help bring some balance, but you have become a stooge for the quacks. Think about these things. Then, if you have the courage, arrange to debate the entire subject with me some time.

Of course Snyderman ignored me, and she continued to promote quackery. In 1995, in a move that has the stench of payola, she started doing radio commercials for a line of herbal drugs and alleged immune enhancers. Moreover, she and Dr. Johnson raised no objection when Joan Lunden presented a horrendously deceptive and irresponsible report on a young man with Hodgkin’s disease.

Lunden made it seem as though the boy was in remission because of some alternative medicine snake oils he took, ignoring the fact that he had undergone conventional therapy first, which was certainly responsible for his improvement. Every day people are cured of Hodgkin’s disease by modern medicine and the media are silent. But let one indoctrinated teenager claim an herb cured him and they make sure everyone in the country hears about it and believes it.

In 1996 *GMA* continued its brand of pseudo-journalism with a puff piece on the delusional ritual known as therapeutic touch, which is now a great fad in New Age nursing circles. Dr. Johnson wasn't wild with enthusiasm but voiced no skepticism, while Joan Lunden was in awe and expressed anger at the medical establishment that has been keeping such wonders out of the hospitals and medical schools for so long. I wrote to Snyderman, Johnson and Lunden:

I bet you \$10,000 you cannot find a therapeutic touch practitioner who can tell a living human from a corpse, much less detect, diagnose and treat energy fields.

I bet you know that, too, but you go along with this madness and pawn that crap off on the public. Someday the question will be asked, where were you when anti-science tried to kill science?

Joan, your enthusiasm is frightening. Do you really want cult medicine, based on fantasy and delusion, to be taught in medical schools? You talk about professional bias against alternative medicine. Why are you so biased against scientific standards and consumer protection?

Why are you all so anxious to open the floodgates wider so we will sink ever deeper into the sewer of health fraud? We are rapidly returning to pre-Flexner, pre-FDA days, thanks largely to the pandering, sensationalizing, anti-science media. Why don't you ever report on the massive frauds perpetrated in the name of so-called alternative medicine? Remember Laetrile? It's as big as ever, and now there is also shark cartilage, and all the rest.

Thanks a lot, Doctor!

My letters had not the slightest detectable effect. Dr. Johnson later introduced a segment on reflexology, a nonsensical system of diagnosis and treatment, and expressed no skepticism whatsoever. Host Elizabeth Vargas interviewed a reflexologist who showed an oversize model of a foot, showing its zones and alleged connections to organs. She made explicit medical claims about affecting endocrine glands and improving health. The claims are ridiculous and fraudulent.

Vargas could not contain her enthusiasm. "Sign me up!" she exclaimed. Don't show me evidence, just sign me up! This is how these people think and encourage millions of their viewers to think – or fail to think.

An ABC News *Turning Point* program, "*Alternative Medicine: Hope or Hype?*" was presented as an objective and balanced account, but it was, in fact, another irresponsible promotion. The star attraction was Dr. Mehmet Oz, as he has been

many times on many networks. This publicity-seeking heart surgeon of Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, a teaching hospital in New York City, uses all kinds of mystical rituals as adjuncts to surgery. They include hypnosis, yoga, non-therapeutic non-touch, reflexology and aromatherapy. He claims to be studying them scientifically, but it's hard to see how anything could be learned by his methods.

There is little doubt that relaxation, reassurance, and a massage can help a patient feel better about going into surgery, but why the mystification? Why claim that points on the foot are directly connected by mysterious networks to organs and that massaging the points is beneficial to the organs, when there is no evidence that it is true? Why not just give a foot massage because it feels good and is relaxing?

Why claim there is an energy field around every person that can be detected and manipulated when the simplest experiments prove this is not true? Why not give a real massage instead of this (non)therapeutic (non)touch nonsense that originated with HIV phobia?

Why pay a deluded crank \$100 an hour to perform magic rituals during surgery when the patient is anesthetized and can't possibly even obtain a placebo benefit from it? Why play music or hypnosis tapes during surgery when there is no chance they can be heard, even subconsciously? Why don't so-called journalists, in this case host Hugh Downs, ask the most basic and obvious questions? And why wasn't a single skeptical expert interviewed?

Like most shows of this type, *Turning Point* lied by omission. For example, we were told about iridology, the diagnosis of systemic diseases by examination of the iris, and shown an iridology chart that relates segments of the iris to different organs. We were told that it hasn't been proved, but we were not told the whole truth, that the bogus diagnostic system has flunked every test it has ever been put to.

The real story here is that iridology has been disproved, yet hundreds of "certified iridologists" (mostly naturopaths, chiropractors and laypersons) use it to pick the pockets of thousands of trusting clients. *Turning Point* could have done an important exposé of this massive fraud, but chose instead to aid and abet the fraudsters.

Downs reported on the case of a colleague at ABC, producer Gabriella Messina, a woman in her thirties who had recently contracted a rare form of lung cancer. She had one lung removed and her doctors recommended immediate radiation therapy to kill cancer cells that the surgery may not have removed. But she refused radiation and "I started to use my journalistic skills."

We are then shown her desk with piles of articles and books of the type common in health fraud stores and the waiting rooms of naturopaths and chiropractors. No material from the American Cancer Society or quack busters was visible. Journalistic skills indeed.

One article on Messina's desk was Dr. Kelley's *Answer to Cancer*. William Donald Kelley, DDS, is a notorious convicted cancer quack whose dental license was suspended for cancer fraud. He is best known for treating Steve McQueen for lung cancer in Mexico. The actor died shortly after broadcasting that he was recovering. Downs mentioned none of this. Kelley's methods were adopted by New York physician Nicholas Gonzalez, MD, who claims to have analyzed Kelly's former patients and found positive results but has not published his evidence.

Messina then showed viewers why it's called holistic medicine. Once you accept the whole grab bag of New Age foolery, it takes the whole day to take the nostrums and perform the rituals, and it comes to occupy your whole life. If she had accepted the advice of her doctors, she would have had a course of radiation treatments, perhaps been sick for a while after, and then been able to get on with her life.

But with her alternative medicine regimen she spends all day, every day, taking pills (134 from 20 different bottles), giving herself enemas with fresh-brewed coffee, shopping for and preparing special foods, doing yoga exercises and meditations, having TT session, consulting with a feng shui practitioner to make sure her furniture arrangement isn't blocking healing energy, and so on. This must go on forever to keep the demons at bay. Not only is there no evidence it works, but the enemas and pills are certainly physically harmful, and the animist superstition must be a major emotional burden.

Sloppy, inept and dishonest health journalism is rapidly becoming the norm at ABC. For example, in one of his occasional appearances Dr. Timothy Johnson recently did a *GMA* report on the importance of folic acid to heart health. Deficiency can lead to elevated blood levels of homocysteine, which is a heart disease risk possibly as important as elevated cholesterol.

In keeping with these pill-popping times, Dr. Johnson discussed only supplements as a folic acid source and said nothing about food. But if people would simply follow the USDA and Surgeon General's guidelines, and eat several servings of a variety of produce every day, they would ingest several times the RDA of folic acid, the amount in a pill. A more recent *20/20* episode with Dr. Johnson on the

same subject had the same flaw of emphasizing pills over food. No doubt ABC earns more advertising revenues from vitamin peddlers than from grocery retailers.

Another example of ABC's pseudo-journalism is the 1997 *Primetime Live* broadcast alleging filthy and dangerous conditions at the Food Lion supermarket chain. ABC had been put up to the story by the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, which had earlier resolved to put nonunion markets such as Food Lion out of business or greatly reduce their market share.

The union helped the producers get the training and credentials they needed to sneak into Food Lion as employees. There they secretly videotaped about 45 hours on the job. From this they gleaned a few minutes that they used to give millions of viewers the impression that Food Lion routinely sells dangerous rotten food and even food scraped off the floor.

Food Lion had to immediately close dozens of stores and lay off thousands of workers, but it soon roared back with a lawsuit against ABC. The nearly 45 hours of outtakes (unaired video footage), obtained by the chain by court order and only after much foot-dragging by ABC, showed the employees consistently doing their jobs right while ABC tried to get the goods on them.

One scene showed an ABC producer muttering obscenities as an employee cleaned a dirty meat slicer he had just videotaped and hoped to show being used. Another scene showed that spoiled rice pudding, presented to viewers as evidence, had actually been removed from the display to be discarded. Food Lion is also convinced that an ABC employee had vandalized a water heater to make things harder for them. The plumber who repaired it testified that it had been vandalized, but ABC denied the charge.

Another outtake, too outrageous and too risky for ABC to include in the broadcast, showed a staged transaction in which one ABC employee sells a moldy sausage to two others. Yet another shows an ABC staffer saying, "We're going to get these guys." State and federal inspectors had for years rated the stores' sanitation levels excellent.

The jury awarded Food Lion \$5.5 million, but ABC was unrepentant. Diane Sawyer, host of the 1992 broadcast, lied when she told viewers, "The truth of the broadcast was not at issue in this decision," implying that Food Lion didn't dispute the charges and won the lawsuit only because of the producers' fraudulent method of getting its spies hired. She said that *ABC News* stands behind the journalists who did the story.

In fact, the truth of the report was and is hotly disputed by Food Lion and is very much in doubt. Sawyer's statement is a clear signal that ABC has no intention of changing its lying ways. For more on this story see *Priorities*, vol. 9, No. 2, 1997).

Earlier, in 1994, Sawyer told viewers that Tracy Nelson, daughter of television stars Ozzie and Harriet, had been miraculously cured of Hodgkin's disease by acupuncture. But ABC's postmodern pseudo-journalism isn't confined to fraudulent exposés and the promotion of fraudulent alternative medicine. It also includes deceptions about the paranormal and UFOs.

In a 1997 *Primetime Live* broadcast Sawyer promoted the wonders of an animal psychic. This woman, via telepathy, did a Freudian-style analysis of Sawyer's old dog and attributed some of his problems to early trauma. She claimed she received a mental image of their previous home and Sawyer said it was accurate.

In April of 1998 Sawyer hosted a *Primetime Live* episode about Catholic exorcism rituals. She didn't bother to interview rational psychologists and psychiatrists with non-satanic explanations of the events described. The program was totally devoid of reason and critical thinking, and might as well have been an infomercial for the United Brotherhood of Exorcists.

In 1991 Barbara Walters, substituting for Ted Koppel on *Nightline*, focused on the book publishing industry's profiteering from tabloid-type trash. Unfortunately, she said nothing about the scores of health hoax books defrauding and endangering Americans. Instead, she was concerned about unauthorized biographies and her main guest was Shirley MacLaine, High Priestess of the New Age, who has made a fortune by passing off silly ghost stories as autobiography. Walters presented her as a writer of high principles and said nothing about her profiteering by promoting the psychic surgery fraud and other dangerous and expensive nonsense.

A few years earlier Ted Koppel on *Nightline* had done a show on UFOs and gave proponents four times as much time to make their points as he gave the token skeptics. And, in 1995 when the news broke that the Pentagon had wasted millions on a twenty-year program studying the power of psychics for use in spying, Koppel gave the token skeptic, psychologist Ray Hyman, only a few seconds while he gave the three proponents each several minutes to dispute the pentagon's conclusion that the program was worthless. *Nightline* didn't tell viewers that one of the failed psychics used in the program was running a psychic consulting business with his astrologer wife and charging gullible clients \$1,500 per day.

ABC's short-lived series *Put to the Test* is particularly offensive because it pretended to put psychic powers to rigorous scientific testing, but was mostly complicit in deception. In one episode self-appointed psychic detective Noreen

Renier put on a performance not much different from those regularly staged by magicians and psychology professors. Of course, she was declared accurate and genuine, but later refused challenges by skeptics to participate in a real scientific test, even though she was offered hundreds of thousands of dollars to successfully demonstrate her psychic power. The positive publicity from the propaganda show was worth more than that, so why risk it? Viewers were not told about her refusal.

This same show put a self-styled clairvoyant to the test and allowed him to run his scam basically unchallenged. The test was to psychically determine the location of a person who supposedly drove a car to a secret place in the city, and to draw the person's surroundings. The psychic was amazingly successful and millions of viewers were impressed. A few weeks later I saw the exact same trick performed by a teenage criminal in an old *Columbo* rerun, and *Columbo* solved the crime by learning from the child how the trick had been done.

I wrote to the producers of *Put to the Test* and told them about it, but they ignored me. So much for ABC's commitment to rigorous testing to learn the truth. That, too, is just another lie.

In September, 1996, *ABC Television* aired a special, *Chariots of the Gods? The Mysteries Continue*. This was a biased and inept promotion of the pseudoscientific ideas of Eric von Daniken who claims that the Egyptian pyramids, Stonehenge and other ancient monuments were built with the help of space aliens. The program closed with host Richard Karn asking and answering: "Did extraterrestrials visit the earth, importing wisdom and technology to our ancestors? You're going to have to decide for yourself."

This is the excuse for publishing lies dressed up as truth that all the professional liars use, from the most ridiculous supermarket tabloids to the likes of Phil Donahue, Dr. Snyderman, and Dr. Oz. We're going to give you just one side of the story and we'll tell you lots of lies, but it will be up to you to decide what is true. We are witnessing the tabloidization of the entire media universe.

Discussing the ABC series, media critic Gene Emery put it well: "The famous markings on the Nazca Plains in Peru were shown, with host Richard Karn stating that without the ability to fly experts don't know how the Nazcans gained the perspective needed to create such elaborate figures on such a huge scale.

"Von Daniken and the folks at ABC are probably still wondering how the streets of New York City and Washington, DC, could have been laid out so precisely when none of the engineers responsible had ever been in an airplane; and how hoaxers can create intricate crop circle patterns – best viewed from the air – in the dead of night without high-tech equipment" (*Skeptical Inquirer* May, 1997).

One of the most disturbing developments in recent years is the acquisition of ABC by the Disney Corporation, which owns the Disney theme parks, the Disney television channel, *Discover* magazine, and *Disney Adventures* magazine. In order to increase profits at its parks Disney has embarked on a massive campaign to convince Americans that space aliens are visiting earth, that they are abducting and torturing thousands of humans, that an invasion is imminent, and that the government is covering this all up.

The Tomorrowland exhibit at Walt Disney World in Orlando features an “Alien Encounters and Extraterrestrial Experiences” attraction. In order to promote the exhibit Disney sponsored a UFO Summit that featured such “experts” as Budd Hopkins and some of his star abductees. A Disney television pseudo-documentary, *Alien Encounters*, presented the UFOs, alien abductions, government cover-ups and imminent invasion as established fact. It even claimed that the aliens are already waging biological warfare against us by planting dangerous microbes on earth. *Disney Adventures* magazine devoted most of one issue to promoting these insane ideas to children. (*Skeptical Briefs*, June, 1995)

Millions of parents own Disney’s high-flying stock, so they are profiting from the peddling of paranoia to their own children. The strange irony is beyond comprehension. This is the kind of business for which Michael Eisner and Michael Ovit, recent Disney CEOs, personally netted more than one billion dollars each. Dorothy Rabinowitz commented in the *Wall Street Journal*, “Perhaps Mr. Eisner and Disney can next offer us a new Tomorrowland feature – this one on all the people who know that the CIA is controlling them through radio waves emanating from fillings in their teeth.”

Given this type of cynical dishonesty, does anyone believe that *ABC News* will ever tell the truth about UFOs? It would take monumental courage for Peter Jennings, Diane Sawyer and company to defy the mighty mouse, even if they wanted to, and there is no sign they have either the desire or the courage to behave professionally and ethically. Content and complacent with their multimillion-dollar salaries, it is more likely that they will give us still more deceptive stories and promotional propaganda to further whip up the fascination and paranoia.

### [CNN, Crazy Nonsense Network](#)

From its inception Ted Turner’s *Cable News Network*, *CNN*, now part of Time-Warner, has been one of the foremost promoters of superstition, pseudoscience and health fraud. In my 1992 book on alternative medicine I take talk show hosts Sonya Friedman and Larry King to task for repeatedly providing a forum to charlatans and consistently keeping rationalists off the shows. In one episode after

another of Sonya Friedman, a PhD psychologist, promoted the reality and wonders of astrology, crystal healing (even for AIDS), past-life regression therapy, psychic powers, communication with spirits of the dead, UFO abductions, and every kind of fraudulent alternative medicine imaginable. On one show she promoted the lies of a charlatan who had written a book, complete with faked photos, claiming he had discovered a unicorn in Africa. Without a hint of skepticism or irony, Sonya congratulated him for his great discovery.

On another *Sonya* show pop psychologist Wayne Dwyer claimed that positive thinking had been curing AIDS patients in the early 1980s, before the AIDS specialists starting saying it was incurable. Then it became incurable because of this vile propaganda that discouraged positive thinking. “If you think of yourself as a spiritual being,” he said, “there is absolutely nothing you can’t do.”

“Wow!” Sonya replied, “What a wonderful concept. I love it.” She didn’t mention that mental hospitals are full of psychotics with similar delusions of grandeur. She didn’t question his fantasies about AIDS.

Larry King has performed in a similar fashion and provided a promotional forum for assorted diet quacks, past-life regressors, psychics, spiritualists, and even a voodoo priest who, for \$2,000, protects clients from the death curses of other voodoo priests. In March of 1997, the day after the mass suicide of members of the Heaven’s Gate cult, King hosted self-proclaimed alien abductee Whitley Strieber, who he introduced as a UFO expert, in order to help us understand the tragedy. This is akin to calling David Koresh a social psychologist and, had he survived his suicide attempt and was still delusional and unrepentant, asking him to help us understand and prevent dangerous cultism.

In one episode of *Larry King Live*, Uri Geller did his usual conjuring tricks that he passes off as proof of his psychic powers, and King was suitably amazed. In another, Bernie Siegel, MD, who has made a fortune writing books that promote mind-body quackery, claimed that people have been cured of AIDS with positive thinking. King didn’t even raise a skeptical eyebrow, much less ask for the names of these people and their doctors so he could have them on his show and verify the claims. King’s show has hosted the authors of many diet and health hoax books. I have repeatedly begged him and his producer for an opportunity to rebut them and other alternative medicine claims, but they have ignored me and other skeptics and real nutritionists for years.

Another of King’s favorite guests was, until his death from a heart attack at age 61, the doctor-hating doctor, Robert Mendelsohn, MD, who preached that American physicians are little more than professional killers who rob their patients while

doing them in. This mother of all conspiracy theories has become standard fare with the quackery mafia and its clients.

The alternative medicine industry realized it had a valuable ally in King, especially after he survived a heart attack and quit smoking. Soon he was doing lucrative endorsements for a line of unproved herbal drugs, claiming that the products have been scientifically proved to improve heart muscle metabolism, lower cholesterol, keep arteries open and so on.

To understand King's utter disregard for ethical considerations it helps to look at his past. According to an article about him in *Vanity Fair* (September 1997), he has a long history of deception, self-deception, lying, scheming and greed. He has lied to scam loans from banks; lied to women he was engaged or married to; ripped off a business partner for thousands of dollars; and stiffed dozens of creditors, including the funeral parlor that buried his mother, for hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The article also spotlights another aspect of King's personality, his love of celebrities and his own celebrity status, which is part of his insatiable appetite for attention. The interviews and the schmoozing at parties are great fun for him. King embodies the essence of modern journalism. He loves what he does, which is often to lie for fun and profit, and he is terribly greedy for both of these. Seven million dollars a year from CNN is not enough; he needs millions more from deceptive product endorsements.

When CNN boosted King's salary to \$7 million it simultaneously fired seventy of 300 staffers at its Headline News channel to help pay for it. This epitomizes the sick state of journalism today. King is the top celebrity snake oil peddler, and he perfectly represents the cynical and corrupt postmodern pseudo-journalist. Congratulations, Larry. You made it big, and now you are the King of the dung heap.

On one *Larry King Live* show attorney Greta Van Sustrind, a regular guest who comments on legal issues such as the OJ Simpson trial and the impeachment of President Clinton, substituted for King. Her guest was psychic medium John Edward who gave readings to callers about their dead relatives. She said, with a straight face and no expression of skepticism, "So your trade is, you talk to the dead and predict the future." She is usually quite rational and astute, but apparently felt she had to play stupid while playing Larry King.

In August 1993, *CNN Overnight* featured an astrologer who specializes in romantic matchmaking and charges clients \$2,000. Host Ralph Wenge, a newscaster and supposedly a journalist, gave the astrologer free rein as she took

calls and ran her scam. It had the look and feel of a cheesy infomercial. I wrote the following letter.

Dear Mr. Wenge:

Since its inception CNN has been a strong and uncritical promoter of that sacred cow consumer fraud, astrology. I have complained about this many times, to no avail. I have urged CNN to at least give scientists and skeptics equal time to rebut the nonsense, but CNN has blackballed the skeptics completely. I have sent CNN information on books by reputable scholars and scientists that disprove astrology, but it has been ignored. No equal time? Try no time at all, not five seconds in all the years of CNN's existence.

You and CNN continued aiding and abetting the fraud a couple weeks ago with your long free commercial for the astrological matchmaker who charges \$2,000 for a worthless, fraudulent service. It's outrageous. Do you have any idea of the misery this superstition causes in societies that take it seriously?

Why does CNN endorse the idea that we should all submit to the whims of this parasitical profession and live by medieval myths? Did you know that the very first edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica in the late 1700s denounced astrology as nonsense? Have you ever heard of Copernicus, Galileo and Newton? Please come into the 18<sup>th</sup> Century before we enter the 21<sup>st</sup>.

CNN has provided free promotional time to many other scams such as past-life regressions and faith healing, but you seem to have a special fondness for astrology. With the astrological matchmaker CNN, for the umpteenth time, gave a con artist thousands of dollars' worth of commercial airtime, all the more valuable for not being present as a commercial.

On the other hand, CNN has never invited me to discuss what I've learned about alternative medicine (including astrology) in twenty years of studying the subjects from a scholarly, scientific perspective. Other responsible writers and consumer advocates are also denied a voice on CNN. It makes me wonder whether some kind of payola may be involved. Have infomercials now been seamlessly integrated into regular programming? If so, let us know your price.

Several copies of my book on alternative medicine have been sent to CNN, but in case you haven't seen one yet I have enclosed a few of the pages that

mention CNN. See the book for more critical comments on your “world’s most important network,” the one that, more than all the others combined, promotes anti-science, anti-intellectual New Age nonsense, humbug and fraud.

I sent the letter and book excerpts to several newscasters, to the program director and to owner Ted Turner. Perhaps it was coincidence, or perhaps CNN received many such complaints, but, much to my amazement, the situation seemed to improve shortly thereafter. Though King remained his usual self, Sonya left and there seemed to be less bullshit and woo on the network. But the improvement lasted only a year or so. While there is less promotion of astrology, there is more promotion of other myths and frauds.

CNN’s reports and discussions of alternative medicine are mostly uncritical promotions. For example, *CNN World Report*, a weekly series of short reports from around the world, regularly includes puff pieces promoting the wonders of traditional medicine of this or that culture. In May of 1998 a five-minute propaganda piece on traditional Chinese medicine repeated the usual clichés, slogans and lies we have been hearing from the media for decades: Acupuncture has been used for 5,000 years and is proven effective; TCM is holistic and treats causes; Western medicine treats only symptoms, and so on.

*Talkback Live* recently hosted Larry Dossey, MD, whose beliefs about positive and negative intercessory prayers are indistinguishable from those of voodoo practitioners who cast spells, and who claims that there is scientific proof of their magic. The host expressed no skepticism and no rationalists were invited to comment. It was like an hour-long infomercial for Dossey’s latest book promoting the nonsense. Dossey has also endorsed Whitley Strieber’s hallucinations, or lies, about being abducted by space aliens.

Another CNN panel of health and medical experts included sitcom actress Marilu Henner along with physicians and other real experts. Henner is a miserably ignorant pill-peddling charlatan and author of a trashy hoax book from Harpercollins (a Rupert Murdoch company) that promotes the gamut of trendy health frauds. She has no credentials, but since she is attractive and slender she figures she is an expert on nutrition, health and medicine, and CNN agrees.

Incidentally, Henner is featured in an infomercial run on CNBC. She says she became an expert by reading about 400 books on the subject. No doubt many of our Hoax Book Hall of Shame titles are among the 400. She claims she tried a lot of supplement products, but none suited her. Then she heard about one called Comprehensive Formula, started taking it, and suddenly felt more energetic, slept

better, handled stress better, and so on. It costs about a dollar a day, ten times what reasonable supplementation should cost.

The thrust of the commercial is to promise that you will feel a positive difference after taking Comprehensive Formula. I doubt very much if this is true, and I would wager that Henner cannot tell the effects of the product from an identical looking placebo. I hereby challenge her to submit to a simple test to prove that she or anyone else can. Unless she and the company can produce such proof, it is fair to consider the infomercial to be a fraud and a scam.

All bets are off if the product contains herbal stimulants. These are commonly added to supplements to create an illusion of vitamin-induced zest. This type of scam is another consequence of the legalization of the lie that the herbal drugs are dietary supplements, which implies they are nutrients.

One CNN show that has been consistently good for many years is *On the Menu* with Carolyn O'Neal, a Registered Dietician. Unfortunately, it too recently succumbed to the corrupting influence of the herbal drug industry. Every real nutritionist should be outraged by the classification of the drugs as nutritional supplements. Instead, most of them seem to have accepted the institutionalization of this dangerous lie.

The herb industry pushes these drugs every way it can and one way is to spike ordinary foods with them. The show reported on a line of snack chips spiked with St. John's wort, which is promoted as beneficial in depression. O'Neil discussed the products with another nutritionist, and their only beef was that one might not get enough of the drug to be effective without eating more of the salty, greasy chips than would be advisable. They did not question the concept of spiking foods with drugs and dosing millions of consumers, including children. Could this be because a commercial for a major herbal drug company ran during this program?

In July 1997, CNN's coverage of Roswell's tourist-trap 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the crashed weather balloon was pure tabloid. Reporter Jeff Flock showed us around the "crashed saucer" museum, gazed at the "fascinating" model of an alleged alien's body (down, boy, it's just fiberglass) and concluded, "There's a great deal of weight to this evidence." He didn't specify what evidence convinced him and he didn't interview a single skeptic or scientist.

The next day Flock started his Roswell report with, "You spend any amount of time here and you start to believe." Not because of any facts he specified, just from the ambiance and the presence of hundreds of fellow wide-eyed true believers. He interviewed the museum curator without asking a single intelligent question. Then he closed with the same words he had opened with, "...you start to believe." I

thought at the time, this gullible guy is obviously ripe for seduction into a cult – if another Hale-Bopp comes along, I'd keep an eye on him.

For a while it looked like Flock's reports from Roswell would dominate CNN for days, and I believe that was the original plan. However, by a wonderful coincidence Pathfinder made a successful landing on Mars during the Roswell celebration and started beaming back pictures of the red planet. They were spectacular. Science completely upstaged anti-science, and CNN broadcast hours of the fantastic scenes. In a sense NASA saved CNN from itself. The network continues to improve but, having started so low, it still has a long way to go.

### Syndicated Cynicism

Independent syndicated programs have given the networks serious competition in the race to befuddle, deceive and defraud the American public. Deceptive promotions of alternative medicine and things paranormal are standard fare for them. Here are some capsule critiques. Fox and Bloomberg Television are included here because the critiques are too short for separate sections.

**Bloomberg Television** presents a screen divided into several sections, including the main one with narration, and smaller ones that keep viewers abreast of sports, stocks and business, and, believe it or not, astrology. Yes, computer-savvy Michael Bloomberg who says in his autobiography, *Bloomberg by Bloomberg*, that teaching kids critical thinking skills is much more important than teaching them computer skill, devotes millions of dollars of high-tech broadcast resources to the promotion of medieval superstition and fraud.

A recent *Bloomberg Tech Report* reported on three exciting new items in the world of technology: Ford's new, safer airbags; Sharp's new device for sending email over phone lines; and a new service from *Astrology.net* whereby the company mails you your horoscope daily.

Before he retired **Phil Donahue** was the undisputed champion promoter of health misinformation and hoaxes. Over the years he turned his show into virtual infomercials for: diet quack Stuart Berger, MD; health hoaxers Harvey and Marilyn Diamond; Robert Cathcart, MD, who claims great success in treating AIDS patients with intravenous vitamin C; Gary Null, an anti-vaccination activist who promotes assorted cancer and AIDS quackery; and other promoters of bizarre and dangerous health scams.

Donahue even did an entire show with Joan Quigley, the Reagans' astrologer who was promoting her new book, and he expressed no skepticism. In fact, when she said she wrote the book to "explain what astrology is capable of doing at the

highest levels of government” because “it’s a serious science,” Donahue replied, “I believe you.” I believe he really does.

Donahue never gave rationalists and skeptics opportunities to rebut the pseudoscience and fraud. In spite of dozens of protests from responsible scientists and health professionals, Donahue never changed his ways. He won nine Emmy Awards and is generally credited with creating the television talk show as we know it today.

Thanks a lot, Phil.

**The Fox Network** contributions to the millennial madness include fiction such as *The X-files* and *Millennium*, and pseudo-documentaries such as *Encounters* and *Sighting*, which promote the reality of visitors from outer space, haunted houses, and paranormal powers. Fox also broadcast the hoax film *Alien Autopsy: Fact or Fiction?*

**Hard Copy**, where Bill O’Reilly marinated in manure for several years before moving to Fox News, thrives on sensational misinformation and lies. For example, Sharon Stone cured herself of lymph cancer with positive thinking and stopping drinking coffee. Stanislaw Berzynski’s anti-neoplastons are miracle cancer cures being suppressed by the evil FDA. Dayle Schear is an amazing psychic, “the OJ Psychic.” On one program a story promoting the horrors of aspartame (Nutrasweet) was followed by a story promoting UFO abduction mythology.

Jenny Jones, host of *The Jenny Jones Show*, is best known for the notorious “confess your crush” episode that allegedly resulted in the shooting death of a young gay man. Other episodes have been virtual infomercials for health scams and delusions. In one she introduced Dr. Doris Rapp as “America’s top allergist,” when, in fact, most allergists think Rapp’s ideas about environmental illness and allergic misbehavior in children are nonsense. In another she promoted dangerous ant-aging quackery that included megavitamins, amino acids, hormones and the like. The show’s syndicator is Warner Brothers Television, the corporate brother of Warner Books, which has made millions on books promoting similar health frauds.

**Bill Maher**, host of *Politically Incorrect*, is a graduate of Carl Sagan’s alma mater, Cornell University, but is nevertheless scientifically illiterate and deeply superstitious. In one show featuring ghost stories he said he believes psychics are for real, and that astrology and numerology really work. He then challenged guest Joe Nickell, a well-known skeptic and investigator of the paranormal, to “tell us anything that science has ever given us.” He couldn’t think of any examples by himself, even as his show was broadcast around the world via satellite. How does one even converse with a person this dense?

**Montel Williams**, host of *Montel*, seems like such a nice, intelligent man, but his unquestioning acceptance and promotion of assorted psychics prove he is either abysmally ignorant or cynically dishonest. He has phony psychic Sylvia Browne on the show so often that perhaps it should be called *Montel's Sylvia Infomercial*.

The shows are disturbing because it is hard to believe that Montel cannot see through her scams. He usually appears to be very bright and full of insights, but with Browne he invariably feigns stupidity. Like many other television talkers and reporters whose networks and affiliates make millions advertising telephone psychics, Montel plays the idiot who embraces childish magical thinking and is incapable of seeing the obvious or asking an intelligent, skeptical questions. I smell payola.

**Oprah Winfrey**, host of *Oprah*, has presented shows promoting past-life hypnotic regression, UFO abduction, telepathy, spiritualism (communicating with the dead) and faith healing. Some of her shows, especially those with her good buddies Shirley MacClaine and Marianne Williamson, are little more than New Age evangelical services. At least Oprah has come to her senses about weight control and advocates a strictly rational approach that relies on exercise and calorie restriction with no miracles or revolutionary diets.

***Psi Factors: Chronicles of the Paranormal*** is one of the most dishonest and moronic shows ever aired. The paranormal stories dramatized are said to be based on actual case files from OSIR, the Office of Scientific Investigations and Research, supposedly a quasi-military agency whose authority “supersedes all private and local, national and international laws.” A radio version of the show consists of very short reports, just a minute or two in which comic actor Dan Aykroyd tells preposterous stories as if they were true, for example: In WWII Stalin turned remote viewing into an effective long-range weapon. In Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century “somnambulists,” often illiterate shepherders or peasants, would suddenly start talking about surgical techniques or other healing methods. They performed many miracle cures.

*Psi Factors Radio* presented Mina Stinson, also known as Margery, the Blond Witch of Lime Street, as a genuine psychic. She was the wife of a wealthy Boston physician who appointed herself spiritual medium. She held séances during which spirits moved tables, produced dollar bills and live pigeons, and otherwise amused the patrons. Stinson was an alcoholic and a fraud, and it is in this territory that New Age journalism finds its heroes.

**Sally Jesse Raphael**, host of *Sally*, is usually fairly sensible, but she too has promoted cancer fraud, psychic surgery, alien abductions, exorcism, clinical ecology quackery, and assorted paranormal nonsense.

### New Age “Educational” TV

One might expect that nonprofit and “educational” broadcasters would abstain from the orgy of unreason, but no such luck. Here are some examples of what they have given us so far.

**PBS, the Public Broadcasting System**, has been a major disappointment during these strange times. If any broadcaster might be expected to be a moderating influence on the madness, this would be the one. But PBS has, to a great extent, joined in the sensationalizing and pandering. For example, the usually excellent *Nova* series produced “The Case of ESP,” which was little more than propaganda that presented unproven claims and speculation about remote viewing and psychokinesis as established fact. Instead of analyzing and critiquing experiments, *Nova* dramatically reenacted them in a manner that misled viewers.

One episode of PBS’s popular **Bill Moyers** series *Healing and the Mind* gives credence to mystical and magical aspect of tradition Chinese medicine (TCM) such as chi kung (or Qigong). This is the art of manipulating chi, the purported life force that permeates and animates all living things. For example, a patient with fibrocystic breasts was treated by rubbing her ankles. The theory is that the problem derives from disturbed chi circulation in the liver, and this can be corrected by rubbing the ankles.

In another demonstration an elderly chi master held his own against a strong young Westerner who tried to throw him, though it didn’t look like the young man was really trying. A weight-lifting demonstration would have been more convincing, but that would have been far too objective and scrutable. Moyers didn’t know or didn’t tell that in 1988 a team of American scientists went to China and tested chi Kung masters for special powers and found none.

The human pincushions undergoing acupuncture treatments, the vats of steeping medicinal animal parts, and the tai chi exercisers were intriguing, but Moyers failed as a health journalist. For example he was amazed by scenes of patients undergoing brain surgery while wide-awake with only acupuncture and supposedly minimal anesthetic for pain. Moyers didn’t know or didn’t tell that Western surgeons have done brain surgery for decades with patients wide awake to aid in brain mapping and diagnosis. It is not so remarkable since the brain feels no pain from trauma to itself. And Moyers said nothing about the terrible cruelty and utter

devastation wreaked by Chinese medical superstitions on endangered wildlife all over the world.

How can a journalist get accolades for such sloppy work that, tabloid-style, fails to tell the whole truth? Again, it's a sign of the times. We have asked the same thing about Donahue, Sonya, Montel and others who have won awards and huge salaries for habitually incompetent, dishonest, damaging work. Moyers is not very different from them, just more self-righteous.

The show evokes a powerful sense of *déjà vu* in those who haven't forgotten the sensation that reports about acupuncture created in the wake of Nixon's trip to China in the 1960s. Talk shows, news specials, articles and books gushed about the wonders of acupuncture. It was going to revolutionize surgical anesthesia, pain control, and the treatment of scores of diseases. It was going to minimize drug prescribing and cut health-care costs.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) colleges popped up all over the country and acupuncture was licensed in many states practically by acclamation, with no real debate in the media or the legislatures. Now, a quarter century after Nixon's trip, the marvels have not materialized, but another unscientific healing guild has been grafted onto the health care system and will be draining billions of dollars from it for decades.

To secure its status the guild needs another generation to be indoctrinated about the wonders of traditional Chinese medicine. PBS and Moyers kicked off the campaign. To help it stick the local and national media feed the public a steady diet of propaganda booster shots, and make certain no skeptics are heard and the stories of victims of quackupuncture are never told.

Those who missed the program heard and read about it from other media for weeks. For example, Jonathan Storm's article, syndicated nationwide by Knight-Ridder Service, heaped praise on the series and gushed about the wonders of TCM. In China "A doctor can ascribe fibrocystic breast disease to a liver mal-function and cure it by rubbing his patient's ankles. He can. He does. In the West there is no cure."

Sure; and in the West journalists live in a fantasy world.

To boost the show and the companion book, Moyers did many interviews. One with *TV Guide* is accompanied by a photo of him holding a doll-size model of a human with acupuncture meridians and points painted on. It was reminiscent of a Voodoo doll and the theories behind it are about as rational. When the interviewer asks about the vats of medicinal lizards in view, Moyers corrects him. "Geckos,

not lizards,” he says. Perhaps he thinks geckos are some kind of insect or bird. He then said that 60 million Americans use “some kind of alternative medicine – whether exercise, massage, chiropractic.”

Moyers did not explain in what sense exercise, an integral part of prevention and therapy for decades in America, is considered alternative medicine; or why massage and chiropractic for pain are considered alternative medicine, even though they have long been licensed throughout the country. Perhaps he believes the discredited chiropractic theory that all diseases are caused or aggravated by spinal subluxations, for only in this sense is chiropractic “alternative.”

To my knowledge Moyers has never voiced concern about the hoards of charlatans now defrauding the public of billions of dollars while hiding behind alternative medicine sloganeering. In fact, he cooperates fully with the industry’s propaganda machine. For example, *Delicious!* (a health fraud store throwaway that promotes dozens of unproved remedies and supplements) featured an extensive interview with him in which he was silent about the rip-offs promoted by that very magazine.

In 1998 PBS broadcast a series of half-hour shows titled *Traditional Medicine in Asia*, produced by China Central Television (a arm of the Communist Party). Each episode is pure propaganda promoting the wonders performed by chi kung masters. Chi kung, we are told, is an “invisible delicate essence, the life force latent in the body, in nature and throughout the universe.” It has been proved to exist in humans, animals and even plants and fruits. Chi kung masters can sense it and move it around with acupuncture needles or just their fingers, and thereby affect amazing cures of diabetes, heart disease, crippling arthritis, and even cancer.”

Targeted doses of chi directed at viruses, bacteria and cancer cells kills or weakens them, we were told. Other wonders described and shown include animal-part medicines, snake-blood elixirs, and pulse diagnosis. Most remarkably, the masters can detect disturbed chi before disease is manifested and thereby prevent the illnesses.

All this was presented as established fact. The words “alleged” and “claimed” were not used, and no embarrassing questions were raised. For example, if chi is the universal life force, when it is directed at cancer cells and microbes why would they not get stronger? And why was the master, shown detecting chi meridians and acupuncture points with a finger held an inch above the man’s arm, staring intently at the arm? He should have been able to do it blindfolded if he can really detect the energy fields supposedly associated with living matter, meridians (chi channels), and acupuncture points.

Perhaps the most disturbing example of PBS's postmodern irrationalism is its piggybacking on Deepak Chopra's scam. By broadcasting his series of lectures, it gave him an unchallenged forum to preach his brand of magical metaphysics supported only by deceptive pseudoscience. His philosophy is fundamentally and deeply religious, but Chopra gets great mileage with the media and the public by disguising the religion as science. Even mainstream religions don't clamor for equal time because they are blindsided by the clever approach.

When KCET in Los Angeles used Chopra as a fundraiser, he spewed his usual gibberish, the moderator heaped on the usual praise, and the pledges poured in. It was like a New Age televangelical fundraiser. I protested to PBS and Stephen Kulczycki, station manager. He replied that "viewers deserve a chance to make up their own mind (sic) about what they see." His justification is exactly the same as that of the *Weekly World News* editor. It is okay to give unfettered promotional assets and airtime to a delusional or dishonest sophist who is clearly exploiting irrational tendencies in people for huge financial gain. While he feasts and gets fat these broadcast professionals sit at his feet like obedient mutts, and are happy with a few crumbs from his opulent table.

When KCET used Dr. Andrew Weil for its fundraiser in 1997, he dutifully mixed yarns about miracle cures and novel home remedies with trite tips about staying healthy.

PBS proved again, in the same year, that it can pander with the worst of them by broadcasting a one-hour lecture by Caroline M. Myss. She is a self-proclaimed intuitive healer who specializes in psychic diagnosis and "energy medicine." She used to do private readings, but now she does workshops and seminars. The PBS event was a fundraiser, like the one with Chopra. Wyss' web site quotes *Publishers Weekly*: "Caroline M. Myss, PhD, is a pioneer in the field of energy medicine and human consciousness, and has been described as one of the hottest new voices in the alternative health-spirituality scene."

So huckstering the latest pop psychology/alternative medicine hoax – this is the level PBS has sunk to.

In Honolulu the PBS affiliate KHET aired an hour-long *Dialog* show that was supposed to be a balanced discussion of alternative medicine. The bias was evident long before the show aired. When the producers were recruiting guests I was suggested by physicians in the community who know that I have thorough knowledge of the field. But the producers adamantly refused to invite me. In addition to one skeptical MD who was game but inexperienced with the media, and

not an expert on quackery, the panel consisted of several alternative medicine enthusiasts. The moderator was also clearly on their side.

The setup followed the same pattern as the national tabloid talk shows: several proponents, including the moderator, vs. a lone skeptic. The main proponents were nurses who had been indoctrinated in Deepak Chopra seminars and (non)therapeutic (non)touch lessons. One claimed that they can detect and heal disease, injury and even tumors by holding both hands a few inches from the body and scanning the aura. The moderator was impressed and not the least bit skeptical.

No one was concerned that this mystical medicine was being practiced and taught not by an obscure little clinic, but by the Queens' Health System, the largest employer in the state with almost a half billion dollars in annual revenues. I wrote and suggested we do a test of the fantastic claims for the next *Dialog* show, but the producers ignored me.

It is quite clear that PBS and local affiliates have joined in the orgy of unreason, and they use typical postmodern rationalizations for lying to their audiences. Since PBS has joined in the game of promoting anti-science doctrines, scientists and rationalists should reconsider the tremendous financial support they have provided the network for many years.

In mid-1998 PBS affiliates broadcast the PBS production titled *Cancer: Increasing Your Odds of Survival*. This egregiously dishonest bit of propaganda featured **Walter Cronkite** as a shill for the cancer fraud industry. "Alternative cancer therapies," he says, "also go by the names non-toxic and holistic, though some give them labels with negative implications such as unproven, questionable and unorthodox." Of course, the two positive labels are deceptive and the negative labels are accurate, but Cronkite spins it otherwise.

"Science has shown that the alternatives are a promising direction and have worked for some," he says. He promotes vitamin C for cancer treatment, citing Linus Pauling's discredited study. He doesn't mention subsequent studies with negative results or other studies suggesting that excess vitamin C probably promotes cancer. He touts vitamin A, especially the allegedly nontoxic beta-carotene, but doesn't mention the studies in which the smokers who took the vitamin got more lung cancer than those who did not.

Cronkite promotes Essiac, the worthless Canadian folk treatment with four herbs. He says that shark and bovine cartilage have been shown effective in some cancer patients, and that Burzynski discovered peptides that form a natural defense against cancer. Several other cancer snake oils are also given favorable mention. Cronkite interviews only strong supporters and not a dissenting voice is heard.

Cronkite closes with these words: “When conventional treatment offers little chance of a cure it often offers valuable time to learn about alternative therapies. If you’re considering an alternative treatment, research its effectiveness for your kind of cancer. The bottom line is to be informed.”

Yes, folks, there are dozens of wonderful cures for cancer out there, but you have to research them yourself. Your oncologist won’t tell you about them because she is stupid and mean.

I would like to ask this Dean of American television journalism where one might start in researching the effectiveness of unconventional therapies for different kinds of cancer. The American Cancer Society doesn’t know of any such therapies that are effective. There are no studies in medical journals showing positive results using them.

Apparently Cronkite means you should read the snake oil peddlers’ propaganda and believe it. This is obviously what he did. This shameful production, this montage of journalistic sins and outright lies, will always be a black mark on the records of PBS and Walter Cronkite.

One segment of this program has become a journalistic cliché, repeated in hundreds of documentaries, new features, and alternative medicine propaganda pieces to millions of believing Americans. We are shown the first page of the famous (or infamous) *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)* (1/28/93) article “Unconventional Medicine in the United States.” Then we see acupuncture being performed and we are told that, according to this article in the prestigious *NEJM*, Americans visit alternative practitioners more than they do pediatricians, family practitioners, internists, and general practitioners combined.

The message is clear: Americans want and demand acupuncture and other forms of alternative medicine; they are clamoring for it. Now every propagandist for acupuncture, homeopathy, herbal drugs and every other kind of snake oil is using the article to promote his agenda.

But it’s all a lie that has become common cultural knowledge. The study really showed that less than 1% of those surveyed had, in the past year, seen a practitioner for acupuncture or homeopathy, and only 3% took prescribed herbal drugs. All the rot that rationalists scoff at and that generally passes as “alternative medicine” accounted for a tiny percentage of the total. The vast majority of the utilization of so-called unconventional therapy was for relaxation techniques (with or without a teacher), massage, chiropractic (for back pain, not disease), exercise, self-help groups, commercial weight-loss programs and prayer.

If I were the author of this study I would publicize in every way possible what the study really shows, and I would denounce the misquoting and distortion of the study for commercial and ideological purposes. But David Eisenberg, MD, the lead author, is emotionally biased towards Chinese mysticism, as is clear from his book *Encounters with Qi*. The front cover blurb says “An American doctor’s firsthand observations of Qi, vital energy, and the Qi gong masters who use it to heal.” I suspect that he has intentionally allowed the quacks to run wild with his study. I have never heard him or any of the five co-authors object to the use of the article to deceive consumers and legislators.

**TLC, The Learning Channel**, panders and sensationalizes with the worst of the networks. In 1995 its *Science Frontiers* program aired “UFO”, which included interviews with many UFO cultists (identified as UFO experts), but not a single skeptic. The British producer flew a film crew to Washington, DC, to interview Fred Whiting, who told viewers, “There is indeed a cover-up” (of UFOs by the government).

Philip J. Klass, a genuine UFO expert and skeptic, also lives in Washington, but he was not invited to participate. Once again the real cover-up came from the media, which gives airtime only to people involved in the industry of deception about UFOs.

TLC airs so many hours of von Daniken propaganda, such as *Ancient Technologies*, that one might think he owns the channel. It promotes his ludicrous notions about ETs having built many of the world’s great monuments, having practiced genetic engineering in ancient Egypt, and having created animal-human hybrids such as sphinxes and humans with the heads of various animals. The statues of such creatures reflect history, not myths, as we have mistakenly believed.

TLC broadcasts many hours of deceptive programs such as *Armageddon* and *Ancient Prophecies* that give credence to Nostradamus, Edgar Cayce, and other soothsayers. Even its *Science Frontiers: Put to the Test* misrepresents the facts and promotes paranormal pseudoscience. These shows rank right down there with the *Weekly World News*.

One entire day in 1998 was devoted to programs with titles such as *Entertaining Angels*, *Angel Stories*, and *Stories of Miracles*. These were followed by long infomercials for telephone psychoids. Severely corrupted by the most obvious scam, The Learning Channel cannot be relied on to tell the truth.

There was recently a mini-scandal over a TLC documentary on the history of beer. Budweiser sponsored the production, so the neo-prohibitionists were up in arms.

They made so much noise that TLC decided to cancel the broadcast. Yet no one protests the stench of telephone psychic frauds sponsoring sensationalist marathon propaganda shows that promote the whole gamut of psychic rubbish. The stench of payola and corruption is so bad that TLC might more accurately be called The Lying Channel.

**Discovery Channel**, another allegedly educational channel, presents lots of paranormal humbug, but our first example is just plain stupid. This occurred in the *Travelers* series. Two attractive young women hosts of the show are taking viewers around Maui. Sampling the good life, they spend almost five minutes with a cigar master as he shows off his wonderful products. Smoking and laughing, one says, "Thank you very much. I feel high." The other says, "I think I'm hooked." This happened in 1998.

Discovery's *Would You Believe It?* brings us ghost stories and haunted houses, all reported as incontrovertible fact. In one episode the narrator says, "The truth is, visitation by departed souls is a regular occurrence." *Strictly Supernatural* brings us dishonest propaganda that promotes absurd superstitions such as astrology for buildings, bridges and organizations. The deceptive programming is regularly interrupted with ads for telephone psychics.

One of Discovery's many dishonest programs, an episode of the series *Science of the Impossible*, featured psychic sleuthing, precognition, remote viewing and other miracles. Parapsychology pseudoscientist Lloyd Auerbach, Discovery's expert witness for the show, spoke of a future when doctors will have super minds and the ability to heal us from a distance telepathically and without exams, drugs or surgery. Naturally this raises the possibility of psychic assassination. But don't worry. Auerbach assures us that psychic attacks are easily thwarted by strong self-esteem, which confers the power to stop a bullet.

Well now, I suggest we put that to a test on someone with an exceptionally hard head and bloated opinion of himself, such as the great scientist himself, Mr. Auerbach.

Of course, his ilk never accepts challenges to put up or shut up. Auerbach showed his true colors a decade ago in an article he wrote for *Fate* magazine (August 1987). It involves an episode worth examining because it illustrates the bankrupt state of academic parapsychology, a parasitical pseudo-profession that gives aid and comfort to psychic fraud and is often indistinguishable from it. Keep this account in mind next time a TV talker trots out a so-called scientist to give the parapsychology party line.

### [The Psychic Mafia and The Pendragon Caper](#)

In 1987 phony psychic, psychic counselor, and teacher of psychic powers Gharith Pendragon filed a lawsuit in US District Court in Honolulu. *Pendragon vs. Butler, et al* alleged that I and certain acquaintances had libeled and defamed him, and deprived him of his First and Fourteenth Amendment rights by conspiring to bring about his disgrace, humiliation and ruin; depriving him of his constitutional right to teach a non-credit course at the University of Hawaii; hurting his business; and generally ruining his life. He demanded over \$3 million in damages and, in effect, lifetime tenure as a University instructor in the Continuing Education Division. Pendragon and his attorney also demanded an injunction against me and the others against us ever criticizing him.

It all started with Pendragon's classes and the fantastic promotions for them in official university publications and advertisements. He claimed to possess infallible psychic powers of all kinds including clairvoyance, distance diagnosis and healing, telepathy, prophecy, and psychic warfare and defense. He further claimed that these powers were scientifically verified and that he can teach them to others. Among his many lies is that he has a master's degree in psychology from UCLA (he does not even have a bachelor's degree) and that he is a licensed clairvoyant and psychic. (There is no such thing anywhere in the country.)

I made some public statements doubting his powers, and criticizing the use of UH facilities and prestige to promote his sleazy huckstering of a fraudulent service. Then I and UH psychology professor David Watson were invited by KHET Television, the local PBS affiliate, to debate Pendragon and Christopher Byrd on the popular one-hour show *Dialog*. Byrd is the author of *The Secret Life of Plants*, the book that started the fad of talking to plants to make them feel good and grow fast.

One of Pendragon's complaints in the lawsuit was that, in effect Watson and I had made him look like a fool on the program. True, he and Byrd took a trouncing, but they have only themselves to blame. One of my crimes cited in the lawsuit involved a joke I made as a guest speaker in a UH science class. I kidded that because my talk there had been heavily hyped, Pendragon knew I was going to rain on his party and he decided to wage psychic warfare on me on the day of the talk.

First I woke up to my cat vomiting on my bed. Then my car would not start, so that's why I'm late, and so on. I spent no more than two minutes on him, obviously joking. Pendragon referred to my criticisms of him as "near criminal." (He apparently had a fan in the class who took notes or recorded my talk.)

To Pendragon and the occult mafia, criticism and satire aimed at them is sacrilegious and criminal. But his own lies, his miserable performance during the

debate on public television, and no doubt the miserable nature of his classes, led to poor enrollment and the class was not renewed as per his contract with the university.

To make a long story short, Pendragon put me and a dozen academic friends, including some who had never heard of him and never said anything about him, through a year-and-a-half ordeal. It was an extortion scheme. Pendragon and his attorney figured we would settle out of court for a couple hundred thousand to save a million in legal expenses.

As soon as the lawsuit was filed Pendragon and his allies started waging a vicious campaign of lies, defamation and vilification against the defendants, especially me. The biggest salvo of swill was hurled by Auerbach in an article in *Fate* magazine titled “Taking Hawaii Skeptics to Court.” It was an outrageous pack of lies that simply parroted Pendragon’s fraudulent claims. He wrote it without consulting me or any of the other defendants and without any real knowledge of the facts. This is the kind of “objective scientist” the media present as experts.

Many other luminaries of the **parapsychology rackets** rushed to support Pendragon and promote his lies and his extortion scheme without once consulting any of the skeptics. They include Charles Tart (Professor of Psychology at UC-Davis), Donna McCormick (American Society for Psychical Research), Richard Broughton and John Palmer (both of the Institute for Parapsychology), Dennis Stilling (Archaeus Project), and psychiatrist Jule Eisenbud.

Several other prominent parapsychologists and fellow postmodernists were on Pendragon’s list of expert witnesses, including Stanley Krippner (Saybrook Institute), Yugene Taylor, MD (Harvard Medical School), Russell Targ, and Marcello Truzzi.

The involvement of the New Age academics demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between the parapsychologists and the sideshow psychics. The inflated salaries of the former are dependent on a duped public made more gullible by operators like Pendragon, and their prosperity rises and falls with that of the psychoids. The members of both groups make their living deceiving the public and they will do whatever they can to shut up critics.

This was a matter of important principle, so settling (paying an extortion fee to make them go away) was out of the question. Fighting hard was our only option.

In the end, Judge Harold Fong ruled in our favor without a trial. Here are a few excerpts from his *Order Granting Motions for Summary Judgments and for Sanctions*.

“The University did not cancel any course except as provided in its contract with plaintiff ... There is no evidence that plaintiff has a legitimate claim of entitlement to teach parapsychology courses.

“Plaintiff claims that defendants have questioned parapsychology in general and his psychic abilities in particular, and that they have thus defamed him. Since truth is an absolute defense to a defamation action, defendants are clearly entitled to discover whether or not plaintiff in fact possesses psychic powers, yet plaintiff has refused to answer questions on this crucial issue, even after the court ordered him to do so.

“The court finds that plaintiff’s refusal to answer these three interrogatories, along with his vague and incomplete responses to other discovery requests, demonstrates the sort of callous disregard that justifies dismissal. Indeed, plaintiff’s conduct demonstrates a remarkable lack of respect for the discovery process and for the defendants’ right to defend themselves against his accusations. Thus, the court strongly suspects that plaintiff maintains this lawsuit in order to chill defendants’ exercise of their rights, rather than to vindicate his own rights.

“In addition, plaintiff and his counsel could have no reasonable basis for seeking a prior restraint on defendants’ right to speak. Even a casual investigation of the law reveals that the circumstances of this case cannot justify such an intrusion on defendants’ First Amendment rights. The portion of plaintiff’s complaint that seeks such relief is thus also frivolous.

“The record is replete with other examples of plaintiff’s frivolous filings. Under these circumstances, the court has no choice but to impose sanctions.”

After the lop-sided decision in our favor none of the academics and “scientific” parapsychologists had the honesty, decency or courage to apologize to any of the defendants. Their involvement with Pendragon’s extortion scheme exposes them for what they are: dishonest half-wits in league with Occult Flim-Flam Industries, Inc., in mind-bugging the American people. This is why the media love them so much; they are partners in the swindles.

### [Raving Radio](#)

Generally speaking radio talk shows have followed the same pattern as television in embracing lying as a legitimate form of entertainment and a generator of great profits.

**Art Bell** is one of the best examples of the madness afoot in radio land. His *Coast to Coast A.M.* is mostly about the paranormal, crypto-zoology (Big Foot, et al) and space aliens – you know, the ones who created us, our civilizations, our

technologies and our religions. They built cities on the moon, which are still there – on the far side, of course. They have been watching us for millennia and now they are abducting hundreds of thousands of us.

This is part of what Bell calls the Quickening, the accelerating approach of global catastrophe that is bringing earthquakes, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, floods, droughts, famines and raging epidemics of horrible diseases, including secular humanism and homosexuality.

Every bad storm, earthquake, flu outbreak and mass whale beaching is a sign of the impending Armageddon. The violence of nature against humans is increasing exponentially as Earth's way of cleansing itself of human overpopulation. He said, "There is no question about the accuracy of Nostradamus' predictions." If you do not believe all this, according to Bell, it's because you are not a spiritual person. All truly spiritual people understand and believe.

Bell believes that military trainers can use marine mammals in warfare by commanding them telepathically, and he personally communicates telepathically with insects, spiders and other animals. It must be wonderful to be able to psychically command roaches and other vermin out of your house, and parasites off of and out of your body. He claims he has dramatically affected the weather by coordinating his listeners in mass meditation and positive thinking sessions. Shades of Deepak Chopra and Pat Robertson.

A frequent guest on his show is charlatan Edward Dames, who claims almost infallible clairvoyance, which he calls remote viewing. He advertises his remote viewing lessons on Bells' web site. Bell believes, or pretends to believe, anything Dames says, and he is especially in awe of Dames' courageous attempts to remote view Satan.

Bell is also a big fan of alternative medicine, though he seems overwhelmed by the flood of products and the fantastic claims for them. He plugs some and shrugs off others with no apparent rhyme or reason, but he is never skeptical or hostile to even the most brazen frauds. He has frequently featured Bob Guccione, publisher of the distinguished medical journal *Penthouse* magazine, which frequently carries deceptive propaganda for quack cancer remedies and UFO cultism. Bell's web site carries ads for assorted quackery including an immortality device and assorted weight loss scams.

One long-running ad that Bell reads is for a videotape of military personnel interrogating a captured alien. He calls it "truly convincing" and ends with "Is it real? Judge for yourself." His promotion of this product is proof enough that Art Bell is a swindler. He promotes, aids, abets, and directly profits from the deceiving

of his audience. Other ads on Bell's show are for miracle weight loss products and a colloidal mineral supplement that supposedly contains 65 minerals, though only about 10 to 12 minerals are considered essential nutrients.

Surprisingly, while Bell has no trouble believing the most preposterous nonsense, he sometimes expresses doubt about reported events that are strange and rare but not at all impossible. For example, a caller mentioned a bizarre incident of frogs falling from the sky by the hundreds. Such stories, others involving fish, have been well documented and obviously involve water spouts and tornadoes. But Bell said, "I'm not sure I believe that."

On the other hand, during the appearance of the Comet Hale-Bopp in 1997, Bell vigorously promoted the rumor that a giant spacecraft was trailing the comet and he posted a hoaxed photo of it on his web site. When thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate cult committed mass suicide as a gateway to the spaceship, it was natural to suspect that Bell's show had helped to trigger the tragedy.

Whether or not this is so, there is no doubt that Bell is in the business of entertaining by misinforming. He makes a living promoting and exploiting fuzzy thinking, gullibility, superstition and paranoia, which can push unstable persons over the edge, as well as make for a less sane society in general.

***The Michael Jackson Show*** is another abomination from ABC Radio. I haven't listened to it for several years because the show has not been available here in Hawaii, so these comments might be somewhat dated. Some of the following has been adapted from my 1992 book *A Consumer's Guide to Alternative Medicine*.

Michael Jackson is bright, witty, articulate and charming. He is well informed about most of the important national and international issues of the day, and he is an excellent interviewer. Because of these assets he has a great deal of credibility. Unfortunately, in covering health, medical and nutrition issues, Jackson has been grossly unfair, dishonest and a hazard to the public.

Jackson has regularly hosted promoters of laetrile, homeopathy, megavitamins, and other quack nostrums, while denying rebuttal opportunities to dissenting experts. He is quick to host the authors of every quack diet book that comes along, yet has rarely hosted anyone with real credentials in nutrition. He has also helped promote fear of such public health measures as immunizations and water fluoridation by hosting cranks who oppose these measures, but not experts who support them. He likes to brag that he always strives to present a balanced view of controversial issues, but he apparently doesn't consider expensive and dangerous health fraud to be controversial.

Jackson's favorite fake nutritionist and frequent guest is Earl Mindell. Their relationship is exactly what I mean by the title of this chapter, *Broadcasters Romance the Charlatans*. See Chapters Two and Four for Mindell's sordid story.

Jackson's resident physician for years was Robert Mendelsohn, MD (see Chapter Two), the whiney-voiced crackpot who made himself rich and famous by leading the bash-doctors movements now in vogue. Mendelsohn, now deceased, made a career of telling Americans that their doctors are out to rob and kill them. He urged everyone to avoid doctors and go instead to chiropractors, naturopaths and health fraud store clerks for their health care.

He also preached incessantly against vaccinations. Given the endless hours Jackson afforded Mendelsohn to propagandize, it seems likely that the show (then nationally syndicated) inspired thousands of parents to deny their children vaccinations. Jackson always encouraged Mendelsohn in his ravings about the evil Modern Medicine Monster, but never asked him about the activities of the National Health Federation or the American Quack Association, both of which Mendelsohn was once president. The main purpose of these outfits is to promote the right of quacks to peddle snake oils without any regulations or other interference from the government.

Another of Jackson's favorite guests is self-proclaimed health journalist Peter Barry Chowka, who has made a career of promoting laetrile and other worthless cancer treatments. On one show he claimed Steve McQueen's life was prolonged by the "alternative" treatments, such as coffee enemas, that he received in Mexico. In fact, McQueen was ripped off and his death probably hastened in Mexico. Coffee enemas can kill people by depleting the body of potassium. In essence Chowka encourages cancer patients to give up conventional treatments and go to quack clinics in Mexico where they are likely to be robbed and perhaps killed. But Jackson never made a skeptical noise.

Of course, Jackson ignored all my protests. His promotion of health fraud was so consistent and persistent for so long that I strongly suspect some kind of payola.

Another long-time radio talker who has made a career of misinforming Americans about health matters is **Gary Null**. Name any crackpot alternative medicine treatment, from homeopathy, mega-vitamins and mega-enemas to catalyst-activated water, hyperbaric oxygen, germanium, and electromagnetic pulsation devices, and Gary Null is all for it. On the other hand, he rails against science-based cancer treatments and vaccinations of all kinds.

Null peddles his own line of supplements with fraudulent claims about them. He says we should all fast up to six weeks at a time at least once each year. But you

don't have to know the details of all his wild claims to see the depths of his nuttiness. You need only hear his maniacal cackle to know something is seriously amiss with his mind.

A discussion of television and radio personalities would not be complete without a mention of the nation's top-rated radio talker, **Rush Limbaugh**. On one show he was discussing a news item about dentists who warned the public that bottled water usually lacks fluoride and therefore tap water may be better for dental health. Said Rush, "I don't believe it for a minute. Dentists want business like anyone else. If I were a dentist I would be handing out fluoride-free bottled water to all the kiddies."

This was a remarkable confession of utter cynicism and dishonesty. And Rush, what if you were a radio commentator, would you lie whenever it was to your advantage? I think you just admitted you would. But, of course, we already knew that.

Limbaugh, like most media stars, is unfamiliar with the concept of professionalism, by which the priority is doing the job right while behaving ethically. So his deceptive promotion of a fraudulent health product does not come as a surprise. One of the most heavily advertised products on his show, one he personally vouches for, is Cold-Eeze. This is a zinc gluconate lozenge that allegedly can nip a cold in the bud. It tastes horrible and the evidence for it is weak, so I would not waste money on it. But in the promotion Limbaugh says it is "clinically proven, all-natural, and homeopathic."

These are all lies. It has not been clinically proven; it is made in a laboratory and does not occur naturally; and it is not homeopathic but pharmacologic. Does Limbaugh even know what homeopathic means? If it were homeopathic the dose in this product would be about one millionth what it is.

Ironically, Limbaugh has criticized efforts to find treatments for HIV/AIDS. It's a waste of money, he has repeatedly said, because there are no cures for viruses. Yet he peddles a cure for the common cold, which is caused by viruses. And he fraudulently claims it is homeopathic because that is the trendy fad to believe in, though most people don't know what it means.

Limbaugh, like most conservative Republicans, is a strong defender of the tobacco industry. On most days he denies that smoking is as harmful as critics claim. But other times he says the industry should not be sued by states for recovery of the costs of health care for smokers because they die younger than nonsmokers and this reduces their health care expenses.

Here on Maui the *Cindy Paulos Talk Story Show* is usually broadcast from a New Age bookstore or a health fraud store. As a small time talk-jock, she will never be heard by most people who read this. But she is worth mentioning because there are hoards of wannabes like her all over the country. They want to be major radio or television personalities some day and they believe that the way to succeed in the media is to ally themselves with New Ageism and the alternative medicine movement, and to make a career of promoting charlatans and their scams every chance they get. They learned this from the big timers.

Paulos, like Gary Null, has never met a snake oil or a psychic scam that she didn't like. Also like Null, she laughs every few seconds, but more a nervous than maniacal laugh that makes her even harder to bear. I once wrote her a letter protesting her enthusiastic promotion of the fraudulent and dangerous practices of cranial osteopathy and chided her for never airing a skeptical viewpoint. Much to my surprise, she invited me to be her guest for an hour. I believe this was the first and last time she has had a rationalist on her show – or even met one.

The contrast between the way she treated me and the way she treats the charlatans and quacks was striking and quite typical of the postmodern pseudo-journalist. No matter how thoroughly idiotic and dangerous a purported remedy may be, if it is marketed as alternative or natural and involves a pill, powder, potion, gismo, painful manipulation or ritual, she vigorously and blindly supports it. In cranial osteopathy, for example, the theory is that skull bones need adjusting for the treatment of a wide range of diseases, especially neurological disorders.

The practitioners, mostly chiropractors, naturopaths and massage therapists, make fraudulent claims and essentially practice medicine without a license. Their treatments are sheer torture and, applied to children, are nothing less than vicious child abuse. In reality the skull bones are tightly fused, the theory is pure hogwash, and the treatments only benefit the persons who are paid for them. Naturally, when hosting one of the quacks who perpetrate the scam, Paulos could hardly restrain her enthusiasm. But when she had me on she suddenly found her skeptical voice.

Week after week she gushes with friendliness, praise, and encouragement as she promotes the charlatans who parade before her microphone. With me, however, she was hostile and sarcastic, and she inadvertently exposed her real cynical self. She asked what my beef is with alternative medicine.

I gave her an example. I once witnessed a sick, tired, illiterate old woman ripped off by a health fraud store clerk. The woman, a diabetic with arthritis and other problems, was subjected to a fraudulent diagnostic test known as applied

kinesiology by the storeowner. He tested the strength of her arm as he held bottles of various expensive supplements to her body near various organs.

Paulos said, “What’s the harm?”

Yes, and so what if millions are taken in by similar scams every day? And what if the vast bulk of the business of the health food industry comes from lying, cheating and stealing from its gullible customers and risking their health? Paulos and her ilk are unabashed promotional agents and cheerleaders for the multi-billion-dollar health fraud and psychic fraud industries. They dedicate their lives to aiding and abetting the relentless swindling of the American people, and they are proud of it.

*The Michael Reagan Show* on Fox Radio is a forum for political conservatives. Reagan rails against the dishonesty of Clinton and the mainstream media. I have not listened to it much, but I do recall *The Michael Reagan Show* on TV. It was actually an infomercial for the Eurotrym Diet Patch, a piece of adhesive tape one sticks on the alleged appetite control center’s alleged acupuncture points on the wrists. The homeopathic preparation on the tape supposedly acts on the points to reduce appetite. The program looked like a regular talk show with a studio audience and expert panel. But it was all an outrageous scam, and the Federal Trade Commission eventually shut it down.

The one voice of sanity on the air is **Dean Edell, MD**. His radio show, syndicated by EFM Media Management, is an oasis of reason in a wasteland. Edell is rational and outspoken about health fraud. Unfortunately, much of his good work is undone by the local stations that run ads promoting assorted snake oils during the commercial breaks.

The sad fact is, people who base their opinions and actions on history, observation, and logic rather than myth, delusion and superstition are essentially blackballed and shunned by the corporate media. Those who get a rare invitation, usually to provide an appearance of balance, are marginalized, ignored, booed and drowned out – in essence, censored – by the host, the panel and the mob. As party poopers who dampen the euphoria during mass orgies of unreason, they are about as welcome as army ants at a picnic.

The shunning is amazingly thorough and relentless. I could go on for pages listing the freaks, clowns, dysfunctional families, whores, charlatans, Nazis, killers, psychotics, psychopaths, parasites, perverts and politicians who are invited and even bribed to constantly parade through our living rooms. Every type of stupidity, weirdness, crookedness, ugliness, evil and banality is welcome – but rationalism is not.

For two decades the media's doors have been shut tight against proponents of evidence-based nutrition and medicine, and social sanity regarding paranormal matters. There are so many talk shows and so many hours of airtime to fill that the talk show kings and queens from competing networks resort to having each other on their shows, but they still have no time for honest advocates of simple truth.

## Chapter Four

### Embracing the Brave New Dark Age

In September 1994 a remarkable conference took place at the Maui Inter-Continental Resort hotel in Wailea. It was the Sixteenth Annual Maui County Women's Conference and the featured topic of the year was women's health. The sponsors were the Maui County Committee on the Status of Women and a parallel state commission. The Maui group, operating out of Mayor Linda Lingle's office, was in charge of arranging for speakers, exhibitors and paying attendee.

Mayor Lingle herself was to be the featured luncheon speaker and she would attend some of the workshops. Her "Message from the Mayor" flyer welcomed participants and her talk was one of only two that were heard by all. Please recall, Lingle is the postmodern pseudo-journalist turned New Age politician discussed in Chapter One, the one who promoted the Kirlian photography scam through *The Maui News* and ignored my warnings about the fraud.

Not so coincidentally, the other featured speaker heard by all was another postmodern pseudo-journalists, Sandra Sagisi. See more about her below.

An all-day conference on women's health seems like a fine idea, but when I saw the ads promoting the event I was aghast. Instead of seminars and exhibits on osteoporosis, heart disease, breast cancer, obesity, AIDS, prenatal care, immunizations, and nutrition, the conference featured promotional lectures on assorted frauds. Instead of medical doctors, nurses, public health educator, physical therapists, real nutritionists, and researchers with the latest scoop on critical issues, the talks and exhibits were presented by naturopaths, homeopaths, acupuncturists, enema therapists, a hypnotherapist, flower essence peddlers, and fake nutritionists hawking worthless supplements.

Amazingly, the event was not billed as an alternative medicine conference, but as a general conference on women's health. This I had to see. I purchased the \$30 ticket and prepared a flyer warning that the conference is potentially hazardous to one's health and bank account. It criticized Kirlian photography, homeopathy, naturopathy, crystal healing, and the like. I thought it would stimulate some lively exchanges. After all, the event was to be a conference open to the public, one where ideas are exchanged, discussed and debated. Or so I thought.

The flyer opened with Warning: this conference may be hazardous to your health. Then it commented briefly on some of the methods featured at the conference and on Lingle's promotion of the Kirlian photography scam. It closed with these words:

Every quack in America is now hiding behind the propaganda slogans alternative medicine, holistic healing and natural healing. When you hear these slogans hold on to your wallet and run for your life.

You should ask why this conference is devoted to the fringe, the bizarre, the unproven, and the preposterous. Why have real nutritionists and physicians been excluded?

Because this conference is a sham, you should demand a refund of your \$30 (minus \$10 if you eat lunch).

This being Maui, there were flowers arrangements and adornments everywhere, and lots of hugs and kisses all around. First up to the microphone was keynote speaker Sandra Sagisi, the KGMB Television news anchor mentioned in Chapter Three. This was very appropriate since she has long been a prolific apologist and propagandist for fraudulent alternative medicine on her news show. Her talk focused on her battle with breast cancer and she barely acknowledged that modern medicine had saved her life.

I had warned Sagisi in writing before the event that the conference would be dominated by quackery, and I asked her to make at least a token statement warning women away from health fraud, especially cancer fraud. I told her I was especially concerned because I had just learned of three cases of women with cancer opting for acupuncture and other "natural" therapies in lieu of modern medicine.

Sagisi ignored me, but she did thank the organizers for providing airfare, a lovely suite, wonderful meals and a great little vacation from her hectic life in Honolulu. It is amazing how cheap today's journalists will sell a big chunk of their integrity: about two thousand dollars in this case.

### [The Mass Psychology of New Age Flower Fascism](#)

After the opening ceremony and Sagisi's talk, I placed myself strategically at the foot of a staircase leading to the rooms that most of the seminars were to be held in. it was an excellent spot and as the women streamed down the stairs I managed to distribute about 150 flyers. (I was one of just four or five men among 300-odd women, so I stood out.) Even Mayor Lingle took one. She glanced at it and called me a "huckster" as she went down the hall.

Then an astonishing thing happened. A woman who I recognized as one of the organizers of the conference ran up to women who were reading the flyer and ripped it from their hands. When she had about a dozen of them she rushed over to me, crumpled them up and threw them at my feet while shouting that I had better leave the premises. I want to emphasize her complete panic over the women reading my words because this Stalinoid fear of criticism, open discussion and vigorous debate is a key characteristic of the alternative medicine movement and of postmodernism (New Ageism) in general.

The submissiveness of those forbidden to read my dangerous flyer is another key characteristic. None of the women protested the rude, almost violent, censorship that deprived them of their right to think for themselves. None of them came back to me and asked for another flyer.

I then attended the seminar given by the owner of a crystal shop called Angels and Amethysts. I listened politely for an hour as she told 50 women, including Mayor Lingle, all about the healing wonders of her crystals and how to use them for various maladies. She spoke of hearing voices and seeing angels that guide her in using the crystals. She even claimed that the crystals make cars and appliances run better, more efficiently and economically. The audience sat like a herd of obedient sheep, taking notes but not asking questions, not thinking.

When she was finished I waited patiently for someone to comment or ask a question, but no one did. So I raised my hand and asked if it wouldn't be simple to determine whether cars and refrigerators really run better with the crystals attached to the motors. She brushed me off, saying that she wasn't interested in testing the crystals because she knows they work. She said I could purchase crystals from her and test them myself.

I replied that since she profits from selling the crystals and had a commercial exhibit out in the hallway, the burden of proof was on her. Without proof how were we to know she wasn't confusing fantasy with reality – especially since she spoke about hearing voices and seeing angels?

At that instant Mayor Lingle jumped up and hurried out of the room, which I thought was rather strange. I soon learned that she was hurrying to sic the cops on me. Really! When I left the room, I was confronted by two men with hotel security badges clipped to their shirts. One informed me that someone had complained that I was disrupting the conference and that the police were on their way.

I said, "I know the mayor told you that, but the mayor is a liar, and you can tell her I said so." I told them I was a paying participant, showed them my receipt and walked away. Twice more that morning they hassled me, though I wasn't even

distributing flyers or asking embarrassing questions. They warned me not to attend any more seminars or I would be arrested.

Imagine that! Politely asking a perfectly reasonable, obvious question can get you arrested in Mayor Lingle's New Age theocracy. Since the event was billed as a conference and the hour-long sessions were billed as workshops and seminars, I did what people normally do at such events. I asked questions and challenged the speaker to back up her claims with evidence. Clearly, these were not seminars in the normal sense of the word, but indoctrination session. No dissent or skeptical questioning would be tolerated.

Lunch turned out to be an uncomfortable affair. I entered the large dining hall a little late and everyone else was already seated, eight or ten at each table. I had to walk all over the room looking for an empty seat and noticed much pointing and whispering. Word had gotten around about the heretical troublemaker at the conference. I noticed an empty seat but it was right next to Mayor Lingle, so I kept wandering. Finally I found a table with an open chair. I was welcomed, but no one spoke to me during the meal, and two women whispered about me.

After everyone was settled and had been served, Lingle went to the stage and gave her luncheon speech. She told the women that the conference is supplying them with all the tools they need to stay healthy and it was up to them to apply the knowledge they were receiving. I was tempted to ask her if she really believed that women need only the homemade drugs, acupuncture, homeopathy, crystals, colonic and other quackery present at the conference. Might they not benefit from the care of real medical science, real doctors and real nutritionists? However, I noticed through the large glass windows that several police officers were walking around outside, occasionally peering into the dining hall, and they seemed to be looking for someone. That would be me, so I held my tongue.

The police had the good sense not to come into the dining hall and make a scene. I was hungry and wanted to eat the nice lunch I had paid for, and they would have had to drag me out. A half-hour later I left the room with the crowd and quickly slipped away from the police. I managed to avoid them and they left. But in the afternoon two hotel security goons hassled me again, though I had been silent since Lingle called the cops. I got angry and shouted that I am a tax-paying citizen as well as a paying participant at the conference, and if I were evicted or arrested there would be hell to pay as I would sue them both, as well as the hotel, the mayor and the county for a million dollars each.

They finally backed off, but I was uneasy about attending anymore seminars because of the hostility towards me. Besides, I already knew what they were

saying. I'm not psychic, but I've heard and read all their fantasies and lies a hundred times. So I spent another hour perusing the exhibits and left.

After this travesty I repeatedly requested information on how the committee selected speakers and exhibitors and what the criteria were. I requested copies of the meeting in which these matters were decided, but the mayor and the committee members ignored me. They believe they can work in secret with no accountability to the public. I suspect that committee members had business affiliations with the exhibitors they chose. But even if the attraction was strictly ideological, it was a thoroughly corrupt event in which the mayor, the county and the state, using taxpayers' money, personnel and resources, conspired with quacks to deceive and defraud the public.

As a taxpaying and voting citizen and resident in this supposedly democratic community, I have a right to raise these question: is it proper for public officials to involve themselves and their offices in the promotion of products and services that clearly violate state and federal laws regarding the practice of medicine and the marketing of diagnostic and therapeutic devices and drugs? Is it proper for elected and appointed servants of the people to unilaterally grant, to a favored few, exemptions from basic consumer protection laws regarding truth in advertising and informed consent?

I wrote to each of the Maui County Council members, explained everything and requested a hearing before the full council. I told them the committee and the mayor operated in secret, and they created an atmosphere of intimidation that deprived me of my right to participate and speak freely at a public event. Not one of the council members replied.

Media coverage of the event was strictly positive and, of course, nothing was said about my protests or the Mayor's attempt to shut me up. All my efforts to interest the media in the scandalous affair and get them to investigate were in vain. However, much to my surprise, *The Maui News* did print part of my letter to the editor, including this challenge to the mayor and the event committee members:

“Submit the materials promoting the conference and the assorted methods to the state Attorney General or the Maui County Corporation Counsel for an opinion on their legality. If the diagnostic and remedial claims made by the colonic therapist, crystal healers, iridologists and flowers essences peddlers are not deemed fraudulent, I will donate \$5,000 to the committee for the next year's conference. This is on the conditions that the mayor and the committee agree to publicly apologize and refund the \$30 entrance fee to all participants if the claims are judge illegal.”

I learned subsequently that anti-fraud laws in Hawaii are very weak and never applied to anything considered alternative medicine. In retrospect, I probably would have lost the bet had they accepted it. Predictably, though, I was ignored by all parties and by the media.

This conference provided a glimpse of the future as the flower fascists would like it to be, and it manifested some of the following elements of the Brave New Dark Age, if only in embryonic form.

- Cult healing systems and their nostrums will be decreed the official medicines and they are all equally wonderful and miraculous;
- Just as science-trained physicians in Mao's China were banished to distant farms to labor in the fields, and geneticists in Stalin's Soviet Union were sent to their deaths in the Gulag by Lysenkoists, so will providers of evidence-based health care be excluded and marginalized by the New Age Alternative Medicine Revolution;
- No open discussion or dissent from the New Age line will be tolerated; rationalists and scientists will be shut out and whut up, by police force when necessary;
- The New Age administrative committees will operate in secret and they will be autonomous and exempt from oversight by legislative bodies;
- Legislators will be loyal to the New Age Quackery Mafia rather than the public welfare; the few who are smart enough and brave enough to step out of line will be ostracized and vilified; the media will be compliant and subservient to the New Age regime and its committees; the postmodern media will be either enthusiastic in their support or silent; they will say something nice or nothing at all;
- Frequent government-, business-, and foundation-sponsored indoctrination sessions will bring thousands of journalists, educators, free-lance writers, health bureaucrats, health professionals and students into the New Age fold.

The New Age tyranny is facilitated by the mindset of millions of individuals. Who were the women who sat silently through the crystal healer's fantastic ramblings and all the other rubbish spewed at the conference? Mayor Ding-a-Ling, yes, but who were the others? Let's take a closer look at the individual New Age true believer. I will do this in the form of an open letter to a composite character I call Ms. New Age.

As an investigator of these issues, I have locked horns with New Age Virus Positive (NAV-positive) women journalists, educators and politicians much more often than with NAV-positive men. Moreover, as a sociable middle-age heterosexual bachelor with dozens of women friends and acquaintances over the last couple decades, I can attest to the great extent and virulence of the growing epidemic among them. Of course, men are not immune, and those afflicted are often in powerful positions and capable of doing great harm. Several are discussed in this book. However, I have reluctantly concluded that NAV afflicts many more women than men.

I suspect the gender difference has something to do with stereotypical notions that have long tended to discourage girls and women from pursuing studies and careers in math and science, while consoling them with the notion that they have superior intuition, psychic abilities and so on. While there do seem to be biological (genetic and developmental) differences in the distribution of intellectual and emotional traits between the genders, myths about these differences lead to early handicapping that has serious long-term consequences.

Ms. New Age is largely a product of early education and the mass media. But she is also a shaper of the media – not just as a consumer, mother, and teacher, but also as an editor, publisher, producer and talker.

### Dear Ms. New Age

I have encountered you hundreds of times, most often in places like Maui, Santa Cruz, Berkeley, Sedona, Los Angeles and Seattle, but increasingly everywhere I go. You no longer need to speak to me about matters philosophical, metaphysical or related to nutrition or health because I already know what you are going to say. In fact, I no longer dare tell you about my interests and my occupation because this would inevitably lead to a conversation that would go something like this.

Ms. New Age: Hi...nice to meet you. What do you do?

KB: Well, I'm trained in physiology and nutrition, and I have written articles and books on preventive medicine and controversial issues in health care such as various forms of alternative medicine. I guess I'm a health journalist of sorts.

Ms. New Age: Oh, that's so cool! The public has to be educated about holistic healing versus the medical establishment, which is completely controlled by the petrochemical drug industry. They just want to keep you sick so they can make more money. They suppress natural healing like herbs, vitamins and energy healing.

KB: Actually, I'm nervous about all the pill popping going on. People underestimate the dangers of supplements. The emphasis should be on wholesome foods. And I think it's wrong that herbal drugs are called nutritional supplements.

Ms. New Age: But people need supplements because the chemicalized foods from depleted soils don't have any nutrients in them.

KB: Really? I have never seen a study showing that to be true. In fact, the Department of Agriculture database of nutrient content are based on foods commonly available. Foods from health food stores don't have higher nutrient content than those from supermarkets.

Ms. New Age: You believe the government? It's just trying to put small, organic farmers out of business. But what do you think about therapeutic touch?

KB: I'm afraid it's a delusion. There is no evidence that the aura massages do any good, or anything at all. In fact, there is no evidence the aura exists, much less that these practitioners can detect it and affect it. I think young Emily Rosa's study, published in *JAMA*, blew a huge hole in their claims.

Ms. New Age: That's just typical AMA propaganda. Besides, what could a nine-year-old know about it? It's absurd?

KB: there's an *ad hominem* argument if I've ever heard one. It doesn't matter how old someone is. That's one of the great things about science – anyone can do it. The abilities to observe and reason are the greatest assets of our species. The promoters of therapeutic touch should have done a study like Emily's before they pushed it into hospitals and nursing schools, and imposed it on patients and students. They claim they can detect human energy fields, and she proved they cannot. For years I have been challenging them to prove they can tell a live person from a corpse with their aura reading, but they won't do it. It's delusional and fraudulent pseudo-medicine that we all pay for, and I resent it.

Ms. New Age: Well, I've had it done on me and I can tell you it's real. Have you ever experienced it?

KB: If I pay money for so-called therapeutic touch I want to be touched. I'm not going to waste money playing pretend. I'll save it for a real massage. But I would be happy to participate in a properly designed test.

Ms. New Age: You sound very analytical. Can't you just experience it and not analyze it? That's the problem with Western medicine. Everything has to be analyzed and proved. In Eastern medicine they practice more intuitively.

KB: I think the talented medical scientists of Japan, China, India and other Eastern nations would be insulted by this notion. Science is universal and does not belong to any nation or region.

Ms. New Age: (Starting to get irritated) Well, I know herbs work because I have tried them. In fact, I always take this herbal tea mix with me and have several cups a day. It cleanses and builds my blood.

KB: How do you know that? And what does it mean anyway? Aren't you just saying it because the herb peddlers say it?

Ms. New Age: I can feel it. It takes the garbage out of my blood and builds my blood cells.

KB: Your kidneys and liver clean your blood, and your bone marrow builds it. Why do you need the herbs?

Ms. New Age: They help my kidneys, liver and bone marrow do their jobs.

KB: How do you know?

Ms. New Age: I told you, I can feel it. I feel better when I drink the tea.

KB: Maybe the herbs have psychoactive drugs in them, like caffeine. Many do, you know. Maybe they're affecting your brain rather than the other organs. Or maybe it's a placebo effect.

Ms. New Age: Now you're getting weird. You probably eat too much sugar and it poisons your brain.

KB: Actually, the brain runs on sugar. It is not a poison, though eating too much can be harmful, like anything else.

Ms. New Age: Everyone knows sugar is a poison. But I don't want to talk to you anymore. You're very weird. You probably even doubt that vitamins, herbs and meditation can cure cancer.

KB: You're right. I do.

Ms. New Age: I said I don't want to talk to you anymore!

Yes, it has gone something like this dozens of times. I first met you in Berkeley in 1969. You took me to Shambala bookstore and urged me to purchase a dozen books about astrology, herbalism, and mystical journeys. Then we went to a screening of a film on the wonders performed by a Filipino psychic surgeon and you were convinced it was real.

Later we stopped in Sproul Plaza and listened to a disheveled woman with wild eyes rave about being abducted by space aliens. She had just been released from a psychiatric hospital (a bit early, I'd say) and she raged on and on about the doctors working with the government to shut her up and suppress the truth about the aliens. You said she might be right. Weeks later you fled to the Sierra foothills because some psychoids and astrologers were predicting that most of California was about to slide into the ocean.

In Honolulu in the 1970s you gave me a ride in your VW Bug. As we sped along the highway I expressed concern about your front tires, which I had noticed were as bald as Kojak and could blow out any minute. You chastised me for mentioning it because thinking about a catastrophe makes it more likely to happen. You learned this from Leonard Orr, originator of the "rebirthing" techniques and business. You later became a "Certified Rebirther" and would lead your clients through a two-hour torturous process of hyperventilating in a hot tub. They always ended up with horrendous headaches that lasted for hours, and you explained that they were caused by the anesthetics used at the time of birth and finally being released.

You continued your sojourn in the 1980s and 1990s. I recall we had dinner at an Oceanside restaurant and you talked about the importance of being spiritual. You are very spiritual and you prefer to associate and socialize with spiritual people. And, of course, it is essential that your lover be a spiritual person, one who dwells on and strives for things spiritual.

I gently asked if it isn't more desirable to be a good citizen, neighbor, friend, lover, and family member; to be honest, fair, reliable, caring, considerate and responsible. Why is it better to be "spiritual" than to be hard working, compassionate and loving? You had no answer. I thought, but didn't say, isn't being "spiritual" just a way of feeling self-righteous without ever doing anything for anyone else, without having to contribute anything good to society, without adding any truth, beauty or happiness to the world?

Our conversation turned to Deepak Chopra. You said you firmly believe his contention that death is a cultural artifact and we can all live forever if we really want to. Mind-body medicine gives us this power. I said I'm skeptical about Chopra, especially his claims about levitating and living forever. I asked if you would like to read the chapter about him in my latest books, and I offered you a copy of the book. You refused the gift because, you said, you had resolved to be immortal and any skepticism would make success more difficult. Your magical thinking, like Chopra's, has no limits.

Your comment about the evil medical establishment is typical these days. Although you frequent several alternative practitioners, you also regularly see a medical doctor. I asked whether you are happy with your personal physician and the care you get. You said yes, and you feel lucky because your doctor is a rare exception. Most doctors, you are quite sure, are incompetent scoundrels.

It is amazing how many people say something like this. There is only one explanation for the fact that millions are perfectly happy with their own doctors, but are certain that the profession as a whole is rotten: indoctrination by the quackery mafia and its media lap dogs.

For two decades the media, especially the television talk shows, have been featuring sensationalist stories about unethical doctors, medical errors and other problems in the health care system. The successes and advances in medicine are rarely discussed. The public is constantly told that the system is a mess and doctors are boobs and knaves. So they believe it and think the good care they get must be the exception.

A couple years ago you visited me on Maui for a week. The morning after your first night here I awoke to a very strange scene. You had unplugged every appliance in the house, from electric clocks to televisions, computers, and even the refrigerator. You did it to protect us both from the radiation that you said was given off by the devices when plugged in, even if not turned on.

As you continue your immersion in magical thinking you sound more and more like a walking New Age cliché. Your addiction to superstition is stronger than a junkie's addiction to heroin and, I am convinced, equally harmful. You consider yourself iconoclastic and anti-establishment but, ironically, practically all your ideas have come from corporate giants such as AOL-Time-Warner-CNN, ABC-Disney, NBC, MacMillan, Simon & Schuster, Doubleday, Bantam, and Hearst publications.

Now there are millions of you and you seem to be everywhere. You're like an army of brain-dead zombies, thoroughly indoctrinated by the alternative medicine industry and its media lap dogs, and constantly chanting its slogans.

In order to avoid your hostility in social situations I have developed a cover story. I no longer volunteer information about my work and I no longer discuss related issues. Instead I say I'm a landscaper, homebuilder or novelist. I hope you come to your senses some day and I no longer have to dissimulate. But I'm not holding my breath.

[New Age Pander Bears](#)

Lest you think Mayor Lingle's snake oil party was an isolated event involving unimportant people, let me point out that Lingle almost won the election for Governor of the State of Hawaii. She has learned absolutely nothing from the conference debacle, and she promised to do it again even bigger and better. A major plank in her official platform was job creation through support of the health fraud industry. It does not help the state economy much to have residents ripping off only other residents. We have to reach out and mug the tourists too. (Note in 2016: Lingle went on to serve as Governor and largely fulfilled this promise. Health robbers of all kinds can operate in the state with complete impunity.)

Other influential politicians also support the scam artists. About the time of the conference, state Representative Jim Shon, long-time Chair of the House Health Committee, wrote the foreword to a book called *The Hawaii Health and Fitness Guide*, a paperback featuring articles and ads (really, dozens of large display ads in a book) promoting homeopathy, naturopathy, acupuncture, and an assortment of snake oils and bogus diagnostic systems.

Shon was enthusiastic and wrote about the power of individual choice. He said, "No one group has a monopoly on knowledge ...like our diverse society; it's the differences among health care approaches, each seemingly moving in its own direction, that give shape, color, and strength to our personal tapestry of health." As is trendy, he ignored consumer protection in the health field and used multiculturalism to justify health fraud.

Another striking example of this sorry state of affairs is the case of Jack Lewin, MD. He worked for the US Public Health Service before moving to Maui where he had a private practice and later was hired as Medical Director of Kula Hospital. An attractive, articulate and ambitious young doctor, Lewin was soon appointed Hawaii State Health Director and served in Honolulu during most of the decade of the 1980s.

During his reign one action he took as head of the Health Department shocked me. A group of senior citizens had put together proposed legislation to study the problem of health fraud in Hawaii, especially the exploitation of the elderly. Mind you, the proposal was merely to study the problem. Lewin's department strongly opposed the bill and his lieutenants lobbied hard against it. This innocuous little bill was the high-water mark for the concept of consumer protection in the health field here, and it was defeated.

Fast forward to the statewide election of 1994. Lewin is now running for Governor in the Democratic primary and he returns to Maui to campaign. The island has become a center of New Age radicalism and the home of scores of quacks and

thousands of quackophiles. His sponsor and host is an organization called Alaya, the publisher of *Maui'ana*, a fraud-promoting tabloid discussed in Chapter One.

The issue of *Maui'ana* that proudly announced their sponsorship of Lewin's upcoming talk in a full-page ad carried large display ads for the following: Princess Sharula who appears to be 35 but is really 268 years old, and will share her anti-aging alchemy at a \$300 seminar; Adrianna Tripolt, whose series of super enemas will detoxify you and improve your health; Gene Sage, who fraudulently diagnoses diseases and nutritional deficiencies with unproven gadgets (see below for more on Sage) and assorted other charlatans.

I suspected that Lewin was familiar with Alaya, but to be certain I informed him in writing about its activities before he came to Maui. I sent him copies of the ads in *Maui'ana*, and asked him to tell us in his talk what actions he would take as Governor to combat the rampant health fraud on the island and throughout the state. I gave him several examples of fraudulent but thriving medical practices on Maui. He did not reply.

Lewin gave his talk at Casanova, a restaurant in the town of Makawao. The audience was mostly New Age true believers and Alaya's alternative practitioners. During lunch before Lewin's talk members of Alaya each got two minutes at the microphone to pitch their products and services. So, while we ate, Lewin and the rest of us were bombarded with live commercials for the various forms of quackery that Lewin's gross negligence and cynical political pandering had helped give rise to. Just twenty feet from the lectern, Lewin heard them all, including Gene Sage, who brazenly lied and said that his phony diagnostic device is FDA approved.

When Dr. Lewin gave his talk did he address the problem of health fraud as I suggested? Did he comment on the barrage of quackery promotion he had just heard? Did he challenge Sage's lie about FDA approval? No, he presented a vision of Maui and all of Hawaii as a health-fraud tourism destination, a place where visitors enjoy paradise while they experience the gamut of offering from our marvelous rainbow of complementary, alternative and preventive practitioners. The crowd love it.

Thanks largely to support from the New-Age, pond-scum-eating; pill-popping, enema-enamored, anti-vaccination, crystal-healing, horoscope-reading, telephone-psychic-calling crowd, Lewin made a respectable showing. But he did not win. A few months later President Clinton was looking for a new Surgeon General. The press reported that Lewin was on a very short list of prospects and had an excellent chance of being chosen. He had already worked with the Clintons on their early effort at health care reform, and was said to be on very good terms with them.

I immediately faxed the President a letter about Lewin's coddling quacks in Hawaii, and warned that tolerance of health fraud would lead to huge increases in health care costs and endanger the public welfare. Lewin was not chosen but, considering the Clintons subsequent association with New Age gurus Tony Robbins and Jean Houston, my letter may have helped rather than harmed his chances.

The end to this story is incomprehensible to me. After his bid to become Governor failed, Lewin was hired to head the California Medical Association and he moved to the Golden State. Californians seeking relief from the health fraud industry running rampant there will not find leadership or even sympathy from the CMA.

Nor can they expect help from the Medical Board of California (MB) as illustrated by an incident reported on Dr. Dean Edell's radio show. A caller asked Dr. Edell what he thought about a doctor trying to sell him magnets to use in addition to the antibiotic he prescribed. He complained that he felt like a captive audience as his long-time trusted physician, involved in a multi-level marketing scheme, made the pitch for the magnets. Dr. Edell, one of the few voices of reason in the media, thought it was reprehensible and advised the man to tell his story to the MBC.

He did so, and he called Dr. Edell back a few days later. He said the MBC spokesperson said that lots of doctors are now using alternative medicines and as long as he prescribed the antibiotic it's okay. If this really is the position of the MBC, it is an important development, and the public should be warned in no uncertain terms that the medical profession is no longer officially committed to evidence-based medicine and considers it perfectly ethical to peddle worthless crap to patients. Truly strange days have found us.

### **States Encourage and Institutionalize Health Fraud**

Far from being an isolated event, it is clear that Lingle's grand conference was just a noisy moment in a two-decades-long snake oil party across the state of Hawaii and the nation. During this time the field of medical practice has been opened to all comers and now anything goes. Regardless of what the law says, there is more actual regulation of dog food and experimenting on lab rats than of human health-care products and services.

While anti-fraud statutes and other laws regulating the practice of medicine and the manufacture and use of drugs and medical devices remain on the books, they are almost never enforced against anyone proffering a magical diagnostic system or a phony remedy or preventive for any health conditions. Snake oils with the most preposterous fraudulent claims are openly promoted and sold not only in health fraud stores and magazines but also increasingly in supermarkets and pharmacies

large and small. And the habitual and routine crimes of the “legitimate” quacks, the chiropractors, acupuncturists and naturopaths, are never prosecuted.

Over the last decade I have tested the limits of my state’s tolerance for quackery many times. Here are some examples. Many health fraud store clerks play doctor by diagnosing illnesses and nutritional deficiencies, then prescribing herbs and supplements as remedies. At the Good Health Store in Honolulu I saw several people swindled of hundreds of dollars in a matter of minutes. One victim was an elderly woman with diabetes, high blood pressure and arthritis.

The store owner Dan Turetsky, who wears a white doctor’s smock, used a system known as applied kinesiology (AK) or muscle response testing, to defraud her of eighty dollars. He subjectively gauged the strength of her right-hand grip while she held bottles of assorted supplements over one organ after another with her left hand. Their conversation made it clear she had been there before. People were lined up for the procedure and there was no effort to keep personal health matters confidential.

I had the test run on me and was told I had several serious problems and needed various supplements and herbs. As each organ was tested a bottle or two of pills was placed in a grocery bag. When the test was over I took my bag to the cashier who rang up sixty-odd dollars. I pretended I had forgotten my wallet in the car and said I would be right back. I didn’t go back. The store also advertises that it does iridology, another bogus test for illnesses and nutritional needs.

I notified the Honolulu prosecutor, the state Attorney General and the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs. Here was a clear case of practicing medicine without a license and blatant fraud. Prosecution should have been a snap because, like the other clients, I had gotten a handwritten diagnosis and prescription. Prosecution and a class action lawsuit could have resulted in refunds of thousands of dollars to scores of people. But no one took any action to stop the massive swindle, showing once again that health fraud in Hawaii is a sacred cow industry.

Since moving to Maui I have looked into health fraud here. I decided to investigate one of Maui’s alternative practitioners who was clearly practicing fraudulent medicine. Would any amount of evidence, pressure and nagging persuade authorities to take action? Gene Sage advertises heavily in local papers and has a busy practices. He has a master’s degree in biology, but no health-related credentials.

Sage uses three fraudulent tests to diagnose diseases and nutritional deficiencies. One is called live cell analysis, which involves examining blood under a dark-field microscope with a video monitor. Sage claims it reads cholesterol levels, parasites,

infections, and disorders of the digestive, circulatory and immune systems. He lies and says this test is FDA approved for these things. In fact, while the technique is useful for examining cells and tissues, in the hands of snake oil peddlers like Sage it is akin to a set of burglary tools.

Sage also uses so-called metabolic oxidation testing. It involves examining crystallized blood through a regular microscope to detect problems and latent problems, including cancer, in every organ. The third test he uses is iridology, “a deterioration hologram of the entire body,” according to his promotional brochure.

After running these diagnostic procedures, Sage provides an elaborate chart detailing the client’s health problems and nutritional deficiencies. He then prescribes and peddles assorted worthless supplements, herbal drugs and the like. He calls himself a nutritionist and provides nutrition consulting as part of the treatment package.

Sage provides for mail-order diagnostic testing, and this gave me an opportunity to run a little sting. He sends the client a kit with a needle for pricking a finger, a glass slide, a mailing box, and a sheet of instructions. I hired two women to run the sting. One went to his office and had the test run. The other made arrangements for mail order testing. However, instead of sending in her blood I sent in some of the sample of the first woman’s blood. If the tests were valid the results should have been the same, but they were very different. Sage’s diagnoses and prescriptions based on the woman’s blood were radically different from those based on the same blood just days later.

I should mention here that, while my purpose was to test the state’s tolerance of health fraud. I did report this mail fraud to the US Postmaster General and provided him with proof of the ongoing scam, but I did not receive a reply and he took no action against Sage.

Hawaii State law says that a person engages in deceptive trade practices (fraud) when he or she represents goods or services as having characteristics, uses, benefits, or status that they do not have. Here was an open-and-shut case, but would the authorities take action?

I filled out a complaint form and sent it to the state Regulated Industries Complaint Office (RIC), which supposedly deals with problems consumers have with licensed professionals such as medical doctors, chiropractors, and contractors. I told the whole story, pointed out that Sage was practicing medicine without a license, provided copies of his lying advertising flyers, and explained the sting I ran.

Months later I was informed that RICO had examined the material I sent and found no violation. I wrote a letter protesting the decision and asking for an explanation, but got none. I also complained to the Department of Health, but didn't receive a reply.

Next I wrote to 33 key state legislators, mostly those on the health, consumer-protection and education committees. I provided Sage's material and asked them to look into why RICO considers it legal for a lay person to examine, diagnose, prescribe, and peddle remedies based on phony tests using unapproved diagnostic devices and a test that he fraudulently claims is FDA approved.

I said: the same consumer protection and truth-in-advertising laws that apply in other fields of commerce should apply here also; the public assumes they do and assumes that health practitioners must be qualified and their claims must be valid or the state would not allow them; if the law is not enforced then the public should be warned that the state does not protect them from even the most brazen health frauds. For the state to pretend it regulates the practice of medicine, then allow quacks to defraud the public at will while the state collects taxes from the quacks, makes the state complicit, a partner in the fraud.

Only five of the legislators replied to my letter. Two of them urged RICO to reexamine the matter. RICO reviewed the case and a few weeks later wrote to me and the legislators that it had concluded that Sage: is not violating any laws; is not practicing medicine; does not diagnose ailments and disorders; does not treat disease and provides clients adequate written disclosures and includes disclaimers in all of his advertising.

Every one of these points is a preposterous lie, but the last is the most blatant. There are no disclaimers in the literature and none is given to the clients. In fact, Sage claims 95% accuracy for his metabolic oxidation test and FDA approval for the live cell analysis, both outrageous frauds. Anyway, the only adequate disclaimer would read,

“Warning: there is absolutely no scientific basis to the claims made for these diagnostic tests or for the remedies I prescribe and sell for the conditions I fraudulently diagnose and am not qualified to diagnose.”

I made these points in another round of letters to the legislators, but only one replied. They were satisfied with RICO's reaffirming its position without explanation. The only legislator who phoned me was Senator Avery Chumbley from my own district, which is also Sage's district. Legislators are usually inclined to give successful business constituents the benefit of the doubt and Chumbley did

that here. He said I should be satisfied that RICO had investigated and re-investigated and found no violation.

I said that as a taxpaying citizen and health professional I have a right to an explanation of the decision. How can RICO see a disclaimer where there is none, and why won't they show it to me if they have seen one? And how could they possibly decide that no law is violated when Sage claims his bogus test is FDA approved?

Chumbley's reply was illuminating and frightening, especially since he is Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee. He said that even if Sage is lying about the FDA approval, it is not clear that he is breaking any law.

Shortly thereafter I repeated the process of complaining to RICO and writing to legislators about another brazen quack, this one a medical doctor with a valid license to practice in Hawaii. Dr. Yvonne Conner claims she can diagnose allergies with a mystical and fraudulent technique called applied kinesiology (AK), also known as muscle response testing.

Dr. Conner further claims that she can instantly cure any allergy by applying a laser beam to appropriate vertebrae. She confirms the cure by another round of AK, and tells people they no longer have to worry about foods, medicines and other substances that other physicians have told them they are allergic to.

This is a potentially lethal medical fraud and I predicted in my letters to RICO and the legislators that she would kill someone if she is not stopped. As we go to press a year later, no action has been taken to stop her from running the scam.

Chiropractor Farris Odeh has a one-hour show broadcast from a Maui radio station every Saturday. Over and over, weeks after week, he claims that chiropractic manipulations are effective treatment for any and all health problems including asthma, allergies, acne, learning disabilities, diabetes, various infections, diarrhea, endometriosis, epilepsy, impotence, hypertension, infertility, obesity, and even leukemia and cancer. He claims his manipulations can cause a cyst the size of a baseball to disappear.

Have you inherited a tendency to certain cancers, heart disease, diabetes, or other serious health problem? Odeh's manipulations can not only prevent the expression of the genetic problem in you so you don't get the disease your parents died of. They can prevent the disease from being passed on to your children. This is possible because, he says, his treatments actually repair the DNA and normalize your genes. Clearly, Odeh is either God or he is a liar. Odeh also rails against medical doctors and the drugs they prescribe. "Just say no to drugs" should be

applied to all drugs, he say, not just illegal mind benders, because they only mask the problems and make them worse.

I sent a complaint to RICO and included a tape recording of one of his shows with some of his outrageous claims. Weeks later, predictably, I received a letter saying that RICO had investigated my complaint and found no violation. Odeh is a most brazen lying quack and charlatan, and he is defrauding Maui residents of thousands of dollars, but RICO sees to wrongdoing.

This ended my five-year test of the state's tolerance of health fraud. I have proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that there is no limit to this tolerance, and that it is always open hunting season on health seekers in Hawaii. A hunting license is not required, so anyone can nail up a shingle, give himself bogus credentials and titles, sell the public phony diagnostic tests and snake oils, and lie freely about them

I believe the state should shut down the health-related divisions of RICO. Their only function is to deceive people into believing that they are protected from health fraud. In essence the offices serve as fronts for the frauds.

Some of the money saved by closing the offices could be used to: vigorously prosecute blatant health fraud under the state's general antifraud laws; warn the public that they are not protected by the state and must educate themselves; explain the citizens' recourses under civil law should they be defrauded or harmed; and beef up public school programs in science, health, and consumer education.

I believe that the state allows and encourages the health fraud industries as a source of much-needed tax revenues. As long as the state's economy continues in stagnation, authorities are loathe to close businesses that are paying taxes that go towards their salaries. In fact, as I have shown, powerful politicians in Hawaii are looking to greatly expand the health fraud industries by making the state an alternative medicine tourist mecca.

### **Senator Hatch Drugs America: A Quarter Billion Lab Rats**

Obvious, Hawaii is not a unique space case. Developments here are typical of trends sweeping the nation. California, Oregon, Washington, New Mexico, Arizona and others have taken major steps toward institutionalization and taxpayer subsidy of systematic health fraud. The Office of Alternative Medicine (OAM), crammed down NIH's throat by deluded and corrupt Congressmen, and corrupt Senator Orrin Hatch's Snake Oil Preservation Act have transformed Americans into lab rats and guinea pigs for quacks to play with as they see fit.

The health robbers even go after children, pushing scores of pediatric alternative medicines on them and spiking juices, candies, chewing gums, corn chips,

breakfast cereals, soups and others foods with herbal drugs. It is already easy for a child to be dosed with caffeine, ephedra, Echinacea, ginseng, Hawthorne, ginkgo biloba, elder berry, gotu kola, chaparral, kava kava and fo-ti all in one day from spiked foods and drinks. These are not nutrients but pharmacologic agents, ie *drugs*, and the corrupt media and politicians cannot change this scientific fact with their lies and their laws. More drugs are being added and soon the typical child will consume ten to twenty *drugs* each day.

Media-indoctrinated moms administer still more of the drugs with teas, pills, and elixirs. They garnish this chemical soup with overdoses of vitamins and minerals. These women are proud to be responsible, holistic mothers raising natural, organic, healthy children. And teaching them to just say no to drugs – unless, of course, they are herbal, alternative, natural or ancient Chinese drugs.

### [The Media Flunk the Cyanide Test](#)

We have come to this state of affairs largely because the media, instead of doing their job of reporting honestly on these critical issues, tipped the balance in favor of the fraudulent industries and against consumers. The *laissez faire*, holy-cow mode integral to the alternative medicine movement and its media lapdogs attracts hoards of charlatans, psychopaths and career criminals into the health care field.

Why should the bad guys stay with embezzling, check fraud, telemarketing scams, odometer fraud, burglary and the like if they can operate with impunity as alternative health care providers and snake oil manufacturers and peddlers? They not only won't get prosecuted, they will become venerated health gurus, popular with the trendy crowd and sought out by the media for their words of wisdom.

Psychopaths are usually attractive and charming, and in this business the most skillful liars with the best bedside manner and media savvy find success. Today's Dr. Feelgoods have silver tongues that are smooth as silk but also long, slippery and forked. In these days of millennial madness they are free to lie, cheat and steal at will without the slightest danger to themselves, no matter how much they defraud and endanger their clients. The worst that can happen is that business is slow because so many other quacks are competing for it.

Generally, con artists who go too far or get too big without being busted by the police are eventually busted by the media. Local and national consumer reporters enjoy getting the goods on the petty swindlers involved in furniture-moving service scams, car repair rip-offs, appliance rental overcharges, telemarketing swindles, home improvement scams and the like.

However, alternative medicine frauds are untouchable, regardless of how brazen, brutal, bloody, intriguing and sensational they may be. Perhaps the best example of this is the case of one of the original New Age alternative medicines, laetrile.

Suppose God decided to test journalists and others in mass communications businesses for their adherence to some kind of code of intellectual honesty and common decency – such as their own codes of ethics. Suppose God gave them a true story so bloody, bizarre, sensational, and generally juicy that they would instinctively jump on it. But when it turned out that telling the truth about it would conflict with other, deeper, unethical commitments and vested interests, would they do the story? Suppose, in other words, God put them to The Cyanide Test.

For details about the laetrile scam see Dr. Victor Herbert's brilliant and exhaustive expose in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (May, 1979). The condensed story of laetrile is this. In the 1960s a psychopathic criminal chemist named Ernst Krebs, Jr. devised one of the cruelest, longest running, most sophisticated, deadliest and most lucrative frauds of this century. Cancer snake oils have always been lucrative for the quacks, but Krebs took it to a new level with laetrile, or amygdalin, a cyanide-containing chemical common in apricot, peach, and bitter almond pits. He and his cohorts claimed that laetrile is a universal cancer cure, one that works on all cancers at a cellular level.

At first they said that the cyanide, a component of the laetrile molecule, was selectively unleashed on cancer cells for complicated reasons having something to do with pancreatic enzymes. Their propaganda literature on it was ever-shifting smoke and mirrors – pseudoscience that convinced the unsophisticated, including pseudo-journalists. Later they said it works because it is vitamin B-17, the anticancer vitamin. People love all kinds of vitamins and already attribute magical powers to them, so the public could easily accept the revolutionary idea: cancer is a vitamin deficiency disease in the same way as scurvy is. Just as vitamin C prevents and cures scurvy, so laetrile prevents and cures cancer of all types. We are truly saved! It's like the Second Coming!

All this was a scientifically crude yet clever lie that seduced the naïve and uneducated. But what made laetrile huge was the involvement of a millionaire gun-running, convicted stock swindler named Andrew McNaughton and the Mafia. Together they provided the funds and strategic resources to flood the nation's health fraud stores and right-wing bookstores with laetrile propaganda, referrals to laetrile clinics and peddlers and, in many cases, laetrile itself. Millions of Americans were bombarded with vicious and dangerous laetrile lies, including the claim that the evil medical establishment and the government conspire to suppress the wonder vitamin because it would wreck the cancer treatment industry.

This has since become stock propaganda for the alternative medicine movement. Instead of producing scientific evidence for their nostrums, the practitioners and peddlers rave about conspiracies to suppress their cures while they conspire to fabricate theoretical justifications and testimonials. Tons of propaganda funneled through health fraud stores and magazines to their naïve customers has helped to firmly establish the postmodern paranoid myth that the medical establishment deliberately keeps people sick to enrich its members.

Enormous pressure from an indoctrinated public forced valuable resources (that the laetrile industry should have provided) to be wasted on clinical trials to settle the issue once and for all. But when the results proved conclusively that laetrile is worthless against cancer, can cause sickness and death by cyanide poisoning, and probably hastens the death of cancer patients, the laetrile pushers cried cover-up, conspiracy, and so on.

Though they continue to profit from the racket, they have not funded and carried out studies to prove their claims. Of course, if they were not lying, sophisticated studies would hardly be necessary. Like scurvy patients given vitamin C, the benefits would be so rapid and dramatic that they would be obvious.

Thanks to the ignorant, negligent, and corrupt media, Americans still know almost nothing about the fascinating laetrile story, and many think the poison may be effective but is being suppressed by the government. In 1978 when 900-odd members of Jim Jones' People's Temple perished by cyanide poisoning in the jungles of Guyana the media stayed on the story for months, examining every detail of the cult and its last days and hours. Articles, books, talk shows and a movie shocked and fascinated the public.

A few years later when cyanide-laced Tylenol and later Sudafed capsules killed and almost killed several people, once again the media were all over the story. Swinging housewife Stella Nickell, who poisoned her husband and, to make it appear a random killing, stranger Susan Snow, has been immortalized in a documentary often rerun on TLCs' *Medical Detectives*. The uproar over the cases led to changes in the packaging of drugs that have cost manufacturers and consumers billions.

Contrast this to coverage of the laetrile cyanide catastrophe. Here is an amazing case of an infamous deadly poison being successfully marketed as a cancer cure and an anticancer vitamin, and jump-starting the alternative medicine movement. Through decades of this massive fraud the media have been mostly silent, neutral or supportive of laetrile. The poison's toll in lives and money dwarfs that of Jim

Jones and the spiked painkillers, but in the Brave New Dark Age we don't notice dead bodies unless they come in photogenic piles or involve juicy scandals.

Even now the toxic drug is still considered a classic of alternative medicine. If you doubt this, just read some of the most popular alternative medicine bibles, books that have flooded bookstores, libraries, health fraud store, pharmacy bookracks and the homes of tens of millions of health seekers. See, for example, Hoax Book Hall of Shame titles *Earl Mindell's Vitamin Bible* and the Goldberg group's *Alternative Medicine: The Definitive Guide*.

Here, then is a bizarre, ruthless and lucrative crime, one that involves the ancient and intriguing "poison of the pits" used to execute traitors in ancient Egypt, Jews and Gypsies in Hitler's Germany, and criminals in America's gas chambers. The crime victimizes the ill and the desperate and doesn't even spare children. The kingpins of the racket are the inner circle of a powerful cult with a psychopathic pseudoscientist as its leader and a secret alliance with the mob and international racketeers.

One would think that this would be the stuff of endless sensational stories in the media and would make a great movie. Where are Art Bell, Chris Carter, Paul Krassner and Oliver Stone when we need them? The tabloid papers and talk shows could dazzle and nauseate their audiences for weeks without lying to them. Larry King, Jerry Springer, Oprah, Leeza and the rest could actually shock, entertain, educate, save consumers' lives and money, and boost their ratings all at once, without ever straying from the truth or journalistic ethics.

The problem is this: if the media told the real laetrile story, a serious look at the general problem of rampant health fraud operating under the guise of alternative, complementary, holistic, natural medicine would surely follow.

Just as laetrile had blazed a trail for the alternative medicine movement, it could help lead it to disgrace and oblivion. The one thing stronger than the media's love of sensational stories involving brutal crimes, and celebrity and political scandals is their devotion to the basic principles of postmodern pseudo-journalism, according to which all alternative medicine industries are sacrosanct. Period. The mainstream mass media have seen to it that the laetrile catastrophe was less than an anthill to the health fraud juggernaut.

Given this situation, it didn't surprise me when, on *Larry King Live* recently, almost two decades after Laetrile was exposed as a dangerous fraud, baseball star Brett Butler told us that ever since the successful surgery and radiation for his throat cancer, he has been taking good care of himself to help prevent a recurrence, and this includes regularly taking laetrile.

King was impassive and he didn't ask whether Butler's doctor was testing him regularly for chronic cyanide poisoning, which can damage various organs and probably make them more susceptible to cancer as well. He didn't remind Butler and the audience that laetrile has been proved to be a worthless, dangerous and potentially lethal poison. He didn't delve into the psychology of a bright man like Butler falling for such a hideous hoax. Could this be because King has unethical commercial ties to the alternative medicine industry?

I have already provided many examples of the sacred cow status of alternative medicine, but the case of laetrile and the political media illustrates just how sacred. It shows that this principle overrides all other ideological principles and unites even the bitterest of political enemies. If I were doing a tabloid-style story on this I would call it:

### [Mother Jones Caught in Bed with John Birch](#)

*Mother Jones* magazine has always been unabashedly left of center and the John Birch Society has always been even further right of center. But they have always agreed on the evils of the medical establishment, and they are united in their determination to dismantle and destroy the foundations of evidence-based health care as we have known it for most of this century. Reform is not the goal; only total revolution will do.

It is well known that the John Birch Society has always been a strong supporter of laetrile and other health fraud industries. There is a certain logic to this given the organization's fanatical antigovernment-regulation philosophy. The group inspired some legislators and judges to try to legalize the chemical for cancer and circumvent the FDA ruling that laetrile is an unapproved drug and therefore not allowed in interstate commerce. Congressman Larry McDonald, a John Bircher, led the fight in the US House of Representatives until he perished with flight #007, shot down in 1983 after it strayed into Soviet air space.

Less well known is *Mother Jones* and other leftist support of the fraudulent alternative medicine industries. I once tested the strength of this support compared to *Mother Jones'* devotion to leftist ideology and hatred of its enemies on the Right, and found it to be overwhelming. During the Vietnam War Berkeley, Alameda County, and state law enforcers used to regularly gas, beat up, arrest, and sometimes shoot leftist demonstrators, many of whom later became contributors, staffers and loyal subscribers to *Mother Jones* and other leftist publications. During these unpleasant times the cops were frequently egged on by the right-wing, pro-war *Berkeley Daily Gazette* and its editor, Michael Culbert.

Years later it came to my attention that Culbert had become a leader in the alternative medicine industry and a prolific propagandist for laetrile and other cancer quackery. His books and his monthly *The Choice* were widely available in John Birch Society bookstores. Here was an opportunity for *Mother Jones* to get a little revenge on a long-time enemy, expose him and other right-wingers as major players in a huge scam, and strike a blow against the credibility and integrity of the Right.

I supplied them with all the material they would need to make the case in a sensational cover story or a few columns, as they might prefer. But they wouldn't do a story on it. I came to understand why.

In spite of all their destructive delusions in the areas of economics, psychology and sociology, American leftists have usually had the good sense to embrace science and rationalism as powerful tools for progress and improvement of the human condition, especially in health care. But in their blind hatred of wealth, inequality, and the medical establishment, they have decided that the whole system has to go. So now we have the amazing spectacle of the American leftist media allying itself with rightest reincarnations of medieval anti-science and 19<sup>th</sup> Century buccaneer entrepreneurism.

Ironically, the motive for *Mother Jones'* position is as much opportunistic and capitalistic as it is ideological. Like many periodicals these days, it receives substantial advertising revenues from alternative medicine products, services, diploma mills and the like, and it runs trendy articles and a column by longtime alternative medicine propagandist Michael Castleman.

Another example of strange bedfellows and the broad-spectrum nature of the millennial madness is the case of Ira Einhorn, who called himself The Unicorn. He was a long-time prominent leftist radical who, apparently inspired by psychedelic drugs, dove headlong into New Age mysticism, magic, and occultism. He kept a foot in each world and tried to bridge them. His book, *78-187880*, published in 1974 by Doubleday, saw a future transformed by the New Age movement with its radically different perspective and way of thinking. It was just a lot of hot air and NewAgeSpeak, but publishing such drivel is a habit with Doubleday.

This same year Doubleday published Andrija Puharich's *Uri*, a delusional tract about the phony psychic Uri Geller. A dozen years earlier it had published Puharich's *Beyond Telepathy* with an introduction by Einhorn. As least as early as this same year Einhorn showed signs of being a dangerously violent psychopath, but Doubleday thought he represented the wave of the future. In 1977 he murdered his girlfriend Hellen "Holly" Maddux and stuffed her in a trunk which he stashed

in a closet in his apartment. He lived with it for many months before detectives found it. Out on bail, he fled to France where he lived for years in freedom and relative luxury. As we go to press it appears he will be extradited to the United States to stand trial for the murder. Perhaps Doubleday editors will be his character witnesses.

### [New Age Embraces Killer Cult](#)

Aside from the far right, the strongest support for the laetrile killer cult has come from the New Age movement. The best example of this is *New Age* magazine itself, one of the most prominent voices of the movement. In a 1978 article titled "The Medical World's Watergate," Peter Barry Chowka claimed that the medical establishment was suppressing the laetrile cure. The cover of this issue is emblazoned "Curing Cancer" and it lists the following alternative medicines for cancer: creative visualization; natural diets; relaxation techniques; laetrile; and metabolic therapy. The last is a shotgun blast of snake oils including laetrile plus a diet that makes laetrile more toxic, pancreatic enzymes, coffee enemas and other worthless and dangerous nostrums.

The most famous victims of the cult are actor Steve McQueen and a young boy named Chad Green who had leukemia. Chad's parents, persuaded by propaganda that laetrile could cure his cancer, whisked him off to the Del Mar Clinic in Tijuana in spite of a court order that the child continue treatment at Massachusetts General Hospital. Leukemia once meant certain death, but many are now being saved and Chad had a chance with chemotherapy, especially at the outstanding hospital that has been a pioneer in such treatment for children.

In Mexico Dr. Ernesto Contreras, multimillionaire cancer quack and owner of a laetrile factory, kept Chad on chemotherapy (as well as laetrile), obviously fearful of the adverse publicity that would follow if he were to die. But eventually the chemotherapy was stopped while the laetrile was continued. Eight weeks later he died. In the weeks before his death his serum cyanide level was .22 micrograms per milliliter, very close to the fatal .29 level in an Attica, NY, toddler killed earlier after swallowing her father's laetrile tablets. In an unusual and suspicious move, Chad's body was quickly embalmed. This prevented possible detection of cyanide poisoning of his vital organs.

Next came the ironic and pathetic spectacle of Chad's parents and Contreras publicly blaming each other for discontinuing the drugs that probably would have saved him. But they finally put up a good front and announced that Chad had died of stress from homesickness caused by the authorities who made it necessary for them to flee to Mexico for "natural" therapy. This is described in *New Age* in a

1980 article by Chowka titled “Chad Green, A matter of Life, Death, and Freedom.”

The article is a good example of the persistence of a cult myth in the face of a mountain of reality, of a religious faith in a deified poison. Although Chowka knows and reports most of the essential facts of the case, he somehow fails to draw the only logical conclusion, that laetrile failed, as it always has, and that the treatment hastened Chad’s death.

In a classic example of NewAgeThink that could have come from the Peoples’ Temple Minister of Disinformation, Chowka makes laetrile proponents the heroes in a struggle for life and freedom. This two-part cover article gave the laetrile cult (and, no doubt, *New Age*’s circulation) a boost when it should have suffered a knockout punch. When I repeatedly asked Chowka and the magazine’s medical editor, Rick Ingrassi, MD, whether they know of any cases of laetrile curing leukemia or any other cancer, they did not reply.

However, Chowka has found time to be a frequent guest on talk shows that present him as a “science writer” and allow him to hold forth on “natural healing” without skeptical dissent. He has also been a frequent contributor to *East West* and other fraud-promoting publications. Laetrile should have been alternative medicine’s Watergate, but in these strange days, instead of giving us a Woodward or Bernstein to expose the laetrile racket, the media have given us Peter Chowka, Larry King, Phil Donahue and the rest to lie about it and promote it.

Chowka should have apologized for deceiving thousands of readers, then retired from health journalism in disgrace, but his disinformation crusade has continued for many years.

### **From Laetrile to “Medical Freedom”**

Because of the media’s promotion of and silence about laetrile and other cancer scams, Americans have, as a nation, wasted billions of dollars on them in the last several decades. Laetrile proved that Americans are extremely naïve, trusting and gullible about these matters, and that fortunes can be made peddling them worthless and dangerous snake oils, even those universally condemned in the scientific medical community and in courts of law.

All this comes at almost no risk of criminal or civil charges being brought. The laetrile case inspired and emboldened hundreds of cynical health gurus and carpetbaggers, as well as millions of their true-believing foot soldiers who own and work in thousands of health fraud stores and occupy the lower rungs of scores of multi-level pill peddling scams.

Given the acquiescence and support of the media, the momentum and power of this movement became a juggernaut that has succeeded in rolling back standards of scientific rigor and consumer protection in health care to where they were almost a century ago. The *Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA)* of 1994, which the *New York Times* suggests should be called *The Snake Oil Preservation Act*, is one of the greatest victories of an industry over consumer rights in American history. An alliance of supplement and herb manufacturers and wholesalers, health fraud stores, multi-level pill peddlers, mail-order retailers, fringe practitioners, and millions of their indoctrinated customers lobbied Congress for three years to cripple FDA efforts to enforce honest labeling and advertising.

With the leadership of Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah, where herbal drug and supplement manufacturing is big business, they succeeded. The law unleashed hoards of snake oil peddlers who can now swindle the public freely with thousands of worthless nostrums as long as they call them nutritional supplements. It was also a great victory for NewAgeSpeak, since the substances don't even have to be nutrients or things normally present in food. They can be just about anything "natural," including powerful hormones and dangerous herbal drugs.

The absurdity and obscenity of the situation is illustrated by the case of baseball slugger Mark McGwire. He takes daily doses of androstenedione, an anabolic steroid that is sold over-the-counter as a nutritional supplement. The substance is banned by the National Football League and the International Olympic Committee, but not by Major League Baseball.

The media were already camped on McGwire's shadow because of his pursuit of the homerun record. They were looking for every possible story angle, yet they made only a minor issue of his taking the chemical. If it does what its purveyors claim, increase blood testosterone levels, it certainly carries all the risks associated with taking testosterone, including increase the risk of prostate cancer.

McGwire repeatedly and vigorously defended himself on the basis that, according to the FDA, the substance is a nutritional supplement, sold in health food stores and available to all. He even said, "You can't buy drugs over the counter. You have to get a prescription."

No one contradicted him and said, no, it is not a nutrient but a hormonal drug. Senator Hatch and Congress have, in defiance of science and logic, decreed thousands of drugs to be nutrients. Few medical and nutrition scientists have bothered to protest this huge lie, so who can blame McGwire? He really believes the anabolic steroid is a harmless nutrient and is now paid to endorse the dangerous

drug. If a sports record ever deserved an asterisk next to it, his home-run record is it.

(It should be pointed out that his competitor in the homerun race, Sammy Sosa, also takes a drug during games. He chews tobacco, and spits it on the field. Baseball is the only major sport in which many players habitually ingest a powerful, addicting drug during games. The disgusting practice is shown on television to millions of viewers, but rarely commented on by the game announcers.)

When these enormous rollbacks (of *The Snake Oil Preservation Act*) were being considered in Congress, the health fraud store customers were bombarded with calculated, cynical lies about the FDA trying to outlaw vitamin pills and health foods, and even put vitamin users in jail. All the FDA really wanted to do was slow down the massive fraud by forcing truth in labeling, but the faithful dutifully deluged Congress with hysterical pleas and demands that they support Hatch.

Hundreds of radio talk shows and periodicals promoted the bill and urged their listeners and readers to call their legislators. Hatch and his supporters had free access to the media, but health professional opponents were shut out. For months I wrote to newspaper, news broadcasters and talk shows suggesting they open up the debate on the issue. I offered my help – articles, interviews, commentaries – as a professional and expert on the issues. I requested no pay, and offered to cover my own travel and phone expenses.

The silence was deafening. Absolutely no one in the media wanted to hear a dissenting point of view. After all some of their sponsors could be hurt if the bill did not pass.

One of Mormon Senator Hatch's biggest media supporters was felon, pill peddler and compulsive lecher, syndicated radio talker G. Gordon Liddy of Watergate shame. After Liddy gave Hatch hours to promote his bill without opposition, I faxed him several letters urging him to let me comment on the bill and ask Hatch some questions. How about at least pretending to honor the ideal of democracy and allow a debate? As always, I received no reply.

Of course, we all know very well Liddy's attitude towards democracy, and the others are hardly better. I would wager that a careful study would show that in the last 25 years mass media coverage of fraudulent alternative therapies and diets has been strictly positive by at least 100 to 1. The factors measured would be size of audience exposure; size of article (or time in broadcast); and degree and direction of bias.

Another great victory for the health fraud industry was the establishment, a few years earlier, of the Office of Alternative Medicine within the NIH. The OAM was established because quacks got to Senator Tom Harkin and Representative Berkeley Bedell. These gullible but influential politicians used their power to impose the OAM on NIH. The office has provided an appearance of government endorsement, and has been a propaganda bonanza for the fringe-medicine industry and perpetrators of scores of health frauds. It will soon be upgraded to a Center, independent of the NIH, and millions more taxpayer dollars will be wasted on wild-goose chases, sloppy science, pseudoscience, and fraud promotions and cover-ups.

So far, in the name of medical freedom the alternative medicine movement has given us the following: laetrile and hundreds of other worthless and dangerous nostrums, many fraudulently disguised and promoted as nutrients; the widespread licensing and legitimizing of fraudulent health care systems, methods and medicines; and two federal agencies, one to promote supplement frauds, and one to promote alternative medicine frauds.

This is an amazingly successful record. The industry has persuaded Congress to: declare its lies to be the law of the land, directly contradicting firmly established principles of science; give it sweeping exemptions from anti-fraud, truth-in-advertising laws; and give it tax dollars and other resources to promote its fraudulent activities.

But this is not enough for the voracious industry, which wants much more. Now pending in Congress and several states are so-called medical freedom bills which would give all licensed health care providers, from massage therapists, acupuncturists and naturopaths to nurses and medical doctors, the right to sell you any treatment, method or medicine, whether or not there is objective evidence that it works.

The final step in the complete deregulation of health care will be giving the same right to all citizens, even those without any credentials or licenses. It is now clear, as rationalists have been warning for many years, that the “medical freedom” of the alternative medicine movement is the freedom of health scam artists to run their rackets without interference. It denies the rights of health seekers to the truth and to the best available health care. And it exempts a huge field of very important commerce, health related products and services, from anti-fraud laws that apply to practically all other businesses.

[NAV-Positive Academia](#)

We have seen that the mass media, even the nonprofit and educational media, are infected with the New Age virus. Here I will show that the problem also exists in academia and the professional press. A decade ago the virus was largely confined to noncredit divisions, and this stronghold has been maintained. Across the country peddlers of paranormal and alternative medicine frauds have long been using university facilities, publications and prestige to promote astrology, spirit readings, aura diagnosis, past-life regression, ESP training, diet hoaxes, and all kinds of health-care quackery.

These noncredit programs are often run by scientifically illiterate postmodern administrators who are very receptive to proposals for classes that promote the scams and are very hostile to scientists who would expose them. For example, at the University of Hawaii in both Honolulu and on Maui my proposals to teach a class on diet hoaxes, nutrition nonsense and medical frauds have repeatedly been turned down, even though I would have been the most qualified teacher in the system. Meanwhile, these programs have featured dozens of nutrition and healing classes taught by unqualified person who teach exploitative rubbish and often use their association with the university to promote their personal scams.

Recent offerings include a class on vision improvement via eye exercises that allow you to toss away your glasses for good; homeopathic first aid; bio-magnetic touch healing; the science of astrology to help you understand personalities and find order and meaning in your life; the science of graphology to help you determine your career aptitude; flower essences to promote health; and healing through macrobiotics.

The teachers usually do not have college degrees in health or psychology related fields, but the course catalogs tout their “certifications,” bestowed by private agencies, as if they have academic, scientific or legal significance. One course, taught by a renegade pharmacist without training in nutrition, promoted an assortment of nutrition and health hoaxes including the use of laetrile, the notorious fraudulent cancer remedy. Thus, the university aids and abets the defrauding and endangering of the public.

This, then, is the preposterous state of affairs in the University of Hawaii continuing education system: if you have no college degree, but you are peddling some form of fringe medicine or nutrition that the vast majority of health professionals consider nonsense and even fraud, your chances of being hired are very good. But if you have real degrees, and if esteemed professionals have praised your work, your chances of being hired are practically nil.

In short, charlatans, quacks and hucksters are far more likely to be hired to teach health-related courses than highly qualified professionals. Non-credit divisions of colleges across the country follow a similar pattern of promoting fringe medicine and health fraud while providing no classes by experts critical of these things.

I have long warned that this tolerance of anti-science and fraud in the noncredit divisions will allow them to creep into the main body of academia, which will morph into quackademia. This has started to happen as the virus has invaded the academic and mainstream health fields. The subject is worthy of a major volume in itself, but here are a few examples of the trend.

One of the most disturbing developments is the tolerance of cancer frauds by some in academia and the medical community. For example, MIT Press published a book by alternative medicine propagandist Michael Lerner, called *Choices in Healing: Integrating the Best of Conventional and Complementary Approaches to Cancer*.

The book says little about conventional therapies and integration, but a lot in promotion of cancer quackery. The best of complementary medicine, according to Lerner, includes a wide variety of absurd, delusional, egregious and lethal criminal frauds. The appendix provides addresses and phone numbers for clinics, therapies and information resources, conventional and unconventional alike, as if they were of equal value to patients.

Lerner says, "I describe resources as best as I can. Evaluating them is up to your and your physician." Like the tabloid newspapers, he just puts it out there and lets the reader decide. But since he deceives by omitting relevant negative information about the quack remedies and mostly parroting claims made for them, readers cannot come to informed conclusions.

Readers are told how to contact enterprises that dispense poisonous laetrile, Burzynski's phony antineoplastons, Burton's fraudulent immune-augmentative therapy, Livingston's worthless autogenous vaccine, Rivici's killer therapies, and others. But they are not told the whole ugly truth about them and they are not told how to contact expert skeptic who might help people make rational decisions. Nonsensical, discredited, patently fraudulent, thoroughly idiotic and very expensive cancer treatments are presented with the nauseating neutrality characteristic of postmodern tabloid-type pseudo-journalism.

Lerner's flawed premise is that highly-trained medical researchers working in teams with scientific rigor, peer review and the latest knowledge, techniques, and technology, are no more likely to be right about cancer treatments than lone cranks, cultists and criminals literally dreaming up remedies and slick promotions for

them. Of course, Lerner does not discuss the ethics of marketing unproved cancer remedies or treating cancer patients without giving them the whole truth about the treatments. The concept of informed consent is foreign to alternative medicine advocates.

Lerner's philosophy is an expression of cultural and medical relativity: all cancer treatments are equally valid, including those denounced in courts of science and courts of law; and there is no such thing as cancer fraud that the public should be warned about.

The Lerner/MIT book, prominently featured in Bell Moyers' PBS series *Healing and the Mind*, comes with enthusiastic endorsements from the usual suspects of New Age sacred cowdom including Andrew Weil, MD, and Herbert Benson, MD, both of whom have abandoned the most elementary concepts of scientific rigor and consumer protection in cancer treatment and health care in general.

A huge blooper from the medical media was the publication, by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, of a three-page propaganda piece written by Deepak Chopra, MD, and two other TM converts with religious and financial interests in the Ayurvedic products and services promoted in their article. The publication of the article, and the lack of disclosure of the vested interests of the writers, created a heated controversy. *JAMA* published twenty letters on the subject, some critical and some supportive of Chopra. These came with disclosures when appropriate.

The nursing profession and its press are even more susceptible than medical doctors to the New Age bug. Therapeutic touch (TT) and other goofy practices have found their way into hospitals, clinics, operating rooms, nursing homes, nursing colleges and nursing journals. A disturbing example of the trend is a three-part series in the *American Journal of Nursing* promoting crackpot medicine, including TT.

The series, which carried continuing education credits, was vigorously defended in a full-page editorial, "Alternative Solutions to Health Problems," by Lucille A. Joel, RN, EdD, FAAN. She is a professor in the College of Nursing at Rutgers State University and New Jersey, and former president of the American Nurses Association.

Joel questions the very concept of scientific standards and consumer protection in health care and lashed out at the FDA for being too strict. She cheered the creation of the Office of Alternative Medicine (OAM) as "proof the new wave has become a tsunami," but fretted that it might become a "witch hunt," i.e. it might determine that some alternative medicines are worthless. She need not worry about that since

OAM does little serious research and is hardly more than a tax-funded propaganda arm of the industry. The tsunami she refers to is the explosion of public interest in these methods, the new wave of millennial madness furiously whipped up by corporate media.

Joel defends the lack of scientific basis for New Age nursing on the basis that conventional medicine hasn't proved all its procedures either. "One group's quackery is another group's scientific breakthrough," she wrote, thus affirming her belief in total medical relativism. And, incomprehensibly, "...concepts of quantum physics exist," as if the mere existence of these concepts proves total medical relativism and justifies discarding all standards of evidence and logic.

This is typical NewAgeThink. It seems she has been worshipping at the feet of Deepak Chopra, as many nurses have in recent years. Only a woman who has steeped herself in his sophistry could make such a hilariously nonsensical argument.

Joel prefers "alternative medicine" to "complementary medicine" because the later "reveals unconscious bias. Why complementary and not primary? Unorthodox by whose orthodoxy? Unconventional by what standards? An alternative? Yes."

This is nothing less than a denunciation of the very concept of basing health care practices on good theory and sound evidence. She has publicly renounced the epistemology and methodology that has been responsible for essentially all the spectacular advances in preventive medicine and general health care in the 20th Century. It is a sign of the times that she is an influential professor and editor of a major nursing journal.

Fortunately, not all nurses are falling for the nonsense. An editorial by Marilyn Oberst in *Research in Nursing and Health* titled "Our Naked Emperor," denounced therapeutic touch and the concept of energy fields that can be sensed and manipulated to good effect. The work of Linda Rosa, RN, and her daughter Emily Rosa, have shown that nurses trained to be TT practitioners cannot detect human energy fields as they have deluded themselves into thinking they can.

In fact, I promise you, they cannot even distinguish a live person from a corpse, so how are they going to do delicate diagnoses and miraculous healings? The James Randi Educational Foundation has offered \$1 million to any TT practitioner who shows that he or she can detect human energy fields, but the money is very safe. TT is most certainly a delusion, a fraud, or both. Still, the practice and all the myths that go with it, continue to be widely taught to nurses in tax-supported institutions and programs.

Besides the questions about the abandonment of science, the practice has created a cult-like atmosphere for nurses and student nurses. Some feel that their religious rights and those of patients are being violated by the imposition of mystical rituals disguised as science by NewAgeSpeak about energy fields. Christians especially find the rituals offensive. The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has agreed with the critics, but the New Agers defiantly continue the programs. Now, this is a story that journalists could sink their teeth into – if they had any.

A shocking example of NewAgeThink comes from the editors of the once-respected *Journal of Nutrition Education* (March 1995), the official publication of The Society for Nutrition Education. The members of the Board of Editors, the acting editors, plus the Board of Directors of the Society, forty-four in all, hold between them over forty PhD degrees or the equivalent, and about thirty MPH and RD degrees. These are high-level professionals who have done fine work in their fields, so I felt honored when Editor Laurie Chang, MPH, asked me to review dietician Jack Raso's book *Mystical Diets: Paranormal Spiritual and Occult Nutritional Practices*.

The book is a rare and valuable survey of miscellaneous nutrition theories, systems and cults based on pseudoscientific, vitalistic and superstitious concepts. I touched on some highlights and strongly recommended the book to librarians, teachers and students. To my astonishment, my review was published (in the March-April, 1995 issue) immediately beneath another, strongly critical, review of Raso's book.

This one was written by dietician Phyllis Havens, who blasted the book as elitist, biased, closed-minded, misleading, offensive and potentially harmful to readers. She flat-out lied when she wrote that Raso attacked controversial healing and nutrition as “unscientific, cultist, elitist, and silly.” These are her words and quotation marks, but nowhere in the book does Raso use any of these words (though he would have been justified in doing so).

Worse, Havens implies that Ayurveda, chiropractic, naturopathy, TT and other fringe healing systems have been proved as safe and effective as their proponents claim. Since Raso's book could harm readers by its bias and “blatant negativity” it should be kept away from them. Havens is not satisfied with quackery dominating the health book market with a 90% share; she want it to be 100%. All rational dissent from the Great Postmodern Alternative Medicine Revolution must be stamped out, so books like Raso's should be excluded from libraries, classes, and bookstores where consumers might be seduced and harmed by them.

I sent a vigorous protest to Editor Chang and she replied that Havens' review was published because of “the controversial nature of the book.” That was her only

explanation. Since she deemed the book “controversial,” my positive review of it must also be controversial, so she was compelled to balance it with a negative review. She didn’t say whether she would have sought a positive review had mine been negative, but I seriously doubt she would have.

So this is what we have come to: it is now controversial (annoying, offensive or potentially threatening to the ideology or financial interests of some person or group), even in academia, for a highly respected expert who has spent a decade researching the subject from a rational, scientific point of view, to write a book describing and commenting on unfounded, unsupportable, unscientific, unproved, discredited, exploitative and sometimes dangerous nutrition theories and practices.

Never mind even that most of the cultists and quacks constantly denigrate scientific nutrition and real professionals. Fighting back is forbidden. Moreover, it is unacceptable for a professional research publication to publish a positive review of such blasphemy unless the journal gives equal space to a negative review.

Those unlucky few like Raso who choose to devote their lives to educating the public and health professionals, and telling the truth about the safety and effectiveness of hundreds of nostrums offered in the open marketplace, now find their very profession deemed controversial by postmodern dogmatists. In fact, the profession is being defined out of existence as we enter the Brave New Dark Age in which all healing and nutrition systems, no matter how much they contradict the facts and even each other, are considered equal, and it is impolite, unprofessional, politically incorrect, metaphysically incorrect and even libelous to criticize or judge them.

Even the most preposterous quackery is being legitimized, and evidence-based medicine will soon be considered just one of many equal paradigms – actually, it will be less equal because it will be, by its very nature, the only exception to the no-judgment rule, the only one not granted sacred cow status. This will happen because it voluntarily set for itself high ideals and standards of good science and consumer protection. Though enforcement of the ideals is sometimes spotty, adopting them is something none of the alternative medicine guilds would ever consider. Their very existence depends on deception, not evidence and science.

In this case the editor reasoned that if she prints a positive review of a judgmental book she must also solicit and print a negative review to be fair. Even if the latter represents the views of less than 1% of the professional community, it must be given equal space. The rational viewpoint has been chased out of all the print and electronic mass media, crowded out of public libraries and out of major retail book outlets by hoax books, and now it must surrender equal space to irrationalism in

the academic media too? Does this madness have no limit whatsoever? Chang's rationale reeks of the intellectual and moral neutrality so characteristic of the postmodern media, neutrality that implies the triumph of medical and nutritional relativism and irrationalism.

Another disturbing example comes from a library journal and from student journalists at the University of Florida at Gainesville. I have told this strange tale of two books in detail elsewhere (*Nutrition Forum*, July/August, 1995), so here I will summarize briefly. One of the books is my work, *A Consumer's Guide to Alternative Medicine*, an evidence-based encyclopedic critique of dozens of the most popular fringe theories, systems, remedies and diets. The other is Kristin Olsen's *Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine*, a gullible, gushing promotion of unproven and fraudulent alternative medicine. The book is in our Hoax Book Hall of Shame in Chapter Two.

Olsen covers much of the same ground as I do, but from a perspective akin to that of a religious zealot rather than a rational seeker of the truth. She didn't assess evidence regarding safety and effectiveness and cite hard facts and reliable references as I did, but simply parroted the claims of the promoters. Her "investigations" consist of submissively and masochistically subjecting herself to every irrational physical and emotional manipulation she could fit into her schedule of full-time snake-oil sampling.

Her encyclopedia reads like a collection of promotional pamphlets for every known fraudulent method, all stapled together. She declares them all wonderful, yet she never seems well enough to stop seeking treatment. The book is truly bizarre, but it is just one of a flood of ever-larger alternative medicine propaganda tomes crowding bookstore and library shelves.

My book was highly acclaimed by responsible health care professionals, scientists, educators and consumer rights advocates. I am certain that, if polled, at least 95% of qualified persons in the relevant professions would judge it very interesting, informative, responsible and useful, while they would say Olsen's book is representative of the irresponsible and exploitative rubbish that has grown to plague proportions in recent years.

Unfortunately, however, a librarian named Janet M. Coggan, who has no credentials and no significant course work in any health field, trashed my book and recommended Olsen's in *Academic Library Book Reviews* (June, 1993). She called mine "biased" and rated it "not recommended." I vehemently protested to the journal and repeatedly demanded either letter or ad space to respond to the review. I was completely ignored for two years and finally gave up.

Coggan has a Master of Library Science degree and works at the University of Florida Health Science Center Library in Gainesville. I sent her, and later her supervisor Faith Meakin, a strong protest. I challenged Coggan to defend her claim that I was biased against the truth with specific examples, and I wagered \$1,000 that a panel of at least ten health professionals and educators who use the library would disagree with her assessment and would want my book, not Olsen's, on library shelves. They would also judge Coggan unqualified to review health-related books for libraries. Neither librarian responded to my several letters. Coggan immediately hung up on me the one time I contacted her by phone and asked for a response to my challenge.

So, in the tax-supported postmodern academic press a New Age true-believing librarian without training in any health field is paid to judge the works of acclaimed professionals and to essentially dictate to thousands of libraries, even university health sciences libraries, what books on health sciences to buy and not buy. Most libraries can afford only a fraction of the recommended books, so thumbs down can mean oblivion for books that have already been excluded from the major chains, which profiteer from health pornography; from the health fraud stores for obvious reasons; and from most other outlets. This is especially true since the authors are not permitted to comment on damaging critiques written by incompetent and zealous converts to New Ageism.

Well, so be it. We're still in America and I would find a way to air my views and defend my product of ten years of honest investigations ... or would I? I had an idea. Suppose I donate several copies of the book to the library and send a letter to the student newspaper, *The Independent Florida Alligator*, telling readers about the issues, the free availability of the book, and my one thousand dollar challenge. This could stimulate a debate and liven up the dreary, sophomoric paper.

However, I should have known that the paper has become a training ground for the next generation of postmodern pseudo-journalists. There was no chance of getting my letter and challenge published even after I shortened it to less than 200 words because, according to Opinions Editor Jennifer Plate, it was just an advertisement for my book. Yes, my telling students where they can borrow and read the book for free is an advertisement.

Okay, then I would purchase a large display ad in the paper. That way I could tell the whole story, publicize my web site, and sell the book too. Incredibly, however, the advertising department refused to run the ad because, I was told by manager Penny DiPalma, it's an editorial and not an ad. This is the kind of Catch-22 excuse for censorship that rationalists and scientific critics of New Age nuttery increasingly find themselves subjected to by the postmodern media which, for

sociopathic reasons, is waging an all-out war against them. I might be allowed ad space to sell the book, I was told, but no commentary would be permitted, certainly nothing about my objection to Coggan's review or my challenge. Next I wrote to the student radio station and asked them to air the issue on one of their issues-oriented talk shows, but they refused.

This, then, is the ugly reality of postmodern student journalism: at taxpayer expense the best and brightest students (of this pathetic pseudo-profession that is) are being trained to shun, exclude, suppress and censor scientific critics of New Ageism, alternative medicine and medical relativism, and to make certain that there is no free and open discussion and debate of the issues. From the very start the students practice their craft of undermining the important scientific, democratic and ethical principles taught by professors in other departments at the same colleges. This perverted nature of the media industries and their training grounds is one of the most disturbing manifestations of the Brave New Dark Age.

A distressing footnote to this episode is that none of the professors and teachers of nutrition- and health-related courses at the university took any interest in the dispute. Neither my letters explaining the situation nor my article about it in *Nutrition Forum* inspired any of them to express support for me or protest to the library. Apparently they don't care who chooses the books to be acquired by their library or what books they choose and exclude.

Incredibly, Professor RM Pigg, Chairman of the Department of Health Science Education(!), said in a letter that because of the scope of the book none of his department's faculty could "provide the type of technical critique required." They are not competent to review a book on health written at a tenth grade level for the general public? Given their admitted incompetence and their apathy, why are taxpayers paying their salaries?

### [Dr. Rosenfeld's Fallacies](#)

Here I must include a comment about a popular book written by a respected clinician and professor of medicine, *Dr. Rosenfeld's Guide to Alternative Medicine*. The good doctor is naively enthusiastic about a few of the methods he reviews, such as acupuncture anesthesia for major surgery. And he is impressed by anecdotal reports of benefits from Transcendental Meditation, but he doesn't know about or just doesn't tell about reports of serious psychological harm from the practice.

However, for most of the methods he does a fine review of the facts, then in diplomatic language pronounces them worthless. On most specific issues he seems to be in general agreement with alternative medicine's harshest critics. Of the

approximately fifty methods he reviews, he give thumbs up to only about a dozen, mostly for relief of mild and not very important symptoms. About half of these are herbs and most of the rest are bodywork methods.

Like a forester who concludes that most of the trees are terminally ill but the forest is healthy, Rosenfeld concludes that most of the purported remedies are not effective and some are dangerous, but the movement as a whole is wonderful. He tacitly accepts the trendy exemption of alternative medicine from ant-fraud laws, and cannot bring himself to denounce the swindling of Americans of tens of billions of dollars, and the dismantling of a system whose rigorous methodology has proved astonishingly successful. He adopts the industry's *caveat emptor* attitude and has little sympathy for bewildered consumers, distracted and confused by hundreds of bogus claims.

Dr. Isadore Rosenfeld assumes that everyone has the time to read reliable books as well as the ability to discern their value or the ability to even find them under the mountain of fraud-promoting books. He does not understand that the very difficult task of learning the truth is being made utterly impossible for even the most intelligent consumers by the exponentially growing blizzard of deceptive and fraudulent propaganda.

While he does include a short chapter on “How to spot a quack,” Dr. Rosenfeld seems to have no problem with the ongoing deregulation and the diversion by deception of vast resources from effective methods and medicines to ineffective ones. It is puzzling that, even though he gives most of the methods thumbs down, on the back cover of the book he writes, “I wrote this book to show that there is a middle ground, that ‘scientific’ and ‘complementary’ medicine practitioners can and should work together.”

I wonder what middle ground he would find with laetrile peddlers. Either cancer patients drink the cyanide-laced Kool-Aid or they don't. And I would like to see him work with, say, naturopaths and homeopaths after scoffing at almost all the remedies such “doctors” routinely use and knowing that they have been trying to alienate their clients and the public from rational medicine and proven public health measures for decades.

Dr. Rosenfeld's wimpy and amoral “middle ground” is common among physicians who do not want to offend or alienate their media-indoctrinated patients. It seems patronizing to me, implying that people are not intelligent enough or emotionally stable enough to handle the whole truth. The question he does not address is, why should health-care industries that label their products and services “alternative”

and “natural” be exempt from the basic consumer-rights principles that apply to most businesses?

Rosenfeld’s middle ground says, it’s okay if a quack takes your money and you get nothing in return, as long as she doesn’t harm you. The same logic could apply to a check fraud artist, car thief or burglar. Moreover, with the increasing institutionalization of health fraud the quacks steal from all of us, whether we go to them or not, through taxes and insurance payments. Incomprehensibly, this does not seem to bother Rosenfeld and thousands of other professionals who seem resigned to the massive rollbacks in scientific rigor and consumer protection in health care.

A good example of Dr. Rosenfeld’s naiveté, illogic and misunderstanding, and his promotion of deceptive acupuncture dogma, is his article in *Parade* magazine (August 16, 1998) titled “Acupuncture Goes Mainstream (almost).” He describes witnessing a patient at the University of Shanghai about to undergo open-heart surgery. A photo showed her chest cut open while she lies wide awake and smiling, “Her only anesthetic was an acupuncture needle in her right earlobe that was connected to an electrical source. She never flinched. There was no mask on her face, no intravenous needle in her arm.

“When I asked my hosts for scientific proof of the chi theory of acupuncture, they laughed and one replied, ‘Why should we spend time, money and resources just to convince Western doctors of something we’ve used successfully for thousands of years? What better proof do you need than that woman lying wide awake on the table with her chest open?’”

That was good enough for Dr. Rosenfeld. It is most unfortunate that the following questions did not occur to him and still do not.

- How do we know the woman had not received a spinal block or tranquilizer? The Communists are certainly not above such deceptions.
- Most types of surgery are quite new in China, certainly heart surgery is, so how could they have been doing such anesthesia for thousands of years, particularly with the aid of electrified needles?
- Is it not true that the claims of the use of acupuncture as a powerful regional or full-body anesthetic is only about 25 or 30 years old and that these claims originated with the Maoist regime, not with ancient acupuncturists?
- If such anesthesia really works, Dear Comrade Acupuncturist, would you be willing to rely on it when you need major surgery? Why do we never see

photos of acupuncturists themselves undergoing major surgery with only the needles for anesthesia?

If acupuncture anesthesia really works as its American fans like Dr. Rosenfeld claim, if it's really as mainstream as the title of the *Parade* article suggests, why don't doctors rely on the needle anesthesia for their own surgeries? The photo of the woman is twenty years old. Surely Western enthusiasts (perhaps including Dr. Rosenfeld himself) have undergone some surgery since then. And surely, with ten thousand needlers in the country, the science of acupuncture anesthesia must have advanced a great deal in the last twenty years. One would expect reams of endorsements and widespread adoption of the safer and cheaper method by cost-conscious HMOs. This was the original promise of acupuncture.

Instead, all we get are old sightings like Dr. Rosenfeld's that take on mythical status. It's like the chiropractic cure for deafness, a seminal event in the origin of the cult. It is fervently believed by most chiropractors, and taught in their colleges, that DD Palmer invented their profession when he cured a janitor of life-long deafness by manipulating his spine. The myth is repeated endlessly in their propaganda. Like the Immaculate Conception, this is physiologically impossible and it has never happened again, yet they believe.

So it is with Dr. Rosenfeld and the rest. For fun and profit they tell tall tales of sightings of medical miracles and they persuade their readers that acupuncture is wonderful, but they don't subject themselves to it. Like the Chinese needlers themselves, they much prefer the reliable chemical anesthetics.

Some day we will look back on the foolishness of Americans who blindly accepted the myth of acupuncture anesthesia and allowed it to become the Trojan horse that sneaked in all the other acupuncture myths, dogmas, fantasies, delusions and lies. Surely, the reason has gone, if acupuncture can perform the miracle of general anesthesia, who are we to question any of its claims? So they prostrated themselves before this great power and, practically overnight, accorded it all the respect and privileges granted to science-based medicine. Another separate but equal healing system was born, thanks to a hoax and corporate media complicity in it.

### **[Kowtow to Deepak Chopra and Other Sacred Cows](#)**

Every tyranny has its dogmas and prophets, and New Age Flower Fascism is no exception. I'll introduce some of these, but first let me introduce my good friend B. Premanand, the scourge of India's godmen. As a boy growing up in India he believed in miracles and at age 19 he left home in search of God and miraculous powers. But all he could find were parasitical charlatans using conjuring tricks to defraud the gullible.

These godmen have long been a plague across the vast Indian subcontinent, using their skills at deception to exploit the poor, the desperate, and the superstitious. Some have become very wealthy and powerful. Satya Sai Baba, for example, who produces gold from thin air and brings the dead back to life, has millions of devotees, including some of the most powerful (and corrupt) people in India. Premanand has made it his life's work to expose the godmen and promote rationalism in a nation too long held back by a medieval mentality entrenched in all levels of society.

Premanand, ironically, could easily have been one of the most successful and wealthy godmen. With his slender frame, simple dress, long beard, cheerful face, melodious voice, and amazing repertoire of magic tricks, he could charm and fool anyone. But his other traits, compassion and the love of truth, led him on a different path, and he lives very modestly while crusading against the con men. A target of many death threats and at least one assassination attempt, at great danger to himself Premanand has succeeded in exposing and discrediting scores of godmen and essentially putting them out of business. He represents the best of India, with the traits that need nourishing if India is to fulfill its potential.

Now let's look at another Indian, the Harvard-trained medical doctor Deepak Chopra, who lives in a California mansion. Dr. Chopra has forsaken rationalism and become a godman with a difference. Instead of fooling people with sleight of hand, he fools them with sleight of tongue. And instead of scamming superstitious Indian peasants, he scams the superstitious American middle class. This recipe has brought him great wealth and influence.

After his conversion to the TM cult Chopra was appointed Lord of Immortality by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and became Ayurvedic medicine's Messiah in America. His purpose, he says, is to bring "the science of consciousness, India's legacy to human knowledge," to the West. And what is this wonderful science and great legacy which Chopra says "makes the work of Galileo, Newton, and Einstein pale by comparison?" It is exactly that of the godmen, except even more grandiose and delusional and it involves the belief that all miracles are possible through the power of the mind.

Instead of producing gold trinkets like Sai Baba does, Chopra produces "scientific proof" that meditators can levitate and fly, that Ayurvedists can divine the medical uses of herbs by merely gazing upon them, and that meditation can cure all diseases create perfect health, and allow humans to live forever. Quantum mechanics makes it all possible.

Chopra never provides evidence and demonstrations of his fantastic claims, and his proof consists of loads of gibberish about quantum physics. Matter does not exist, only energy, therefore the human mind can intercede at an atomic level and thereby manipulate the flow of energy and events. Professional quantum physicists don't believe a word of it, and his quantum mysticism is reminiscent of the exploitation of relativity and evolution theories by previous demagogues and sophists.

Americans fall for this rubbish because they are half-educated about these matters. They know science is important and that profound truths are involved therein, but since they don't understand the concepts they are easy prey for those who would exploit their ignorance, and their innocence.

The titles of Chopra's many books and audiocassettes are sprinkled with the words magic, miracle, mind-body, healing and, of course, quantum. His stock in trade is sophistry, which he uses skillfully to create illusions of understanding and delusions of grandeur. Chopra is surely one of the greatest sophists of the Twentieth Century and Americans have spent millions on his promise that, through the miracle of scientific mysticism, they can have all the things they want: amazing weight loss, sound sleep, reversal of the aging process, perfect health, wonderfully-behaving kids, eternal life (on Earth, not in Heaven), and spectacular wealth.

If you want to understand Chopra without spending days wading through the dreary nonsense common to all his books, a little volume titled *Creating Affluence* best epitomizes the prolonged hoax he has been perpetrating on the public. The book is about 100 small pages with an average of about 100 words per page, so there is barely more text than on one full page of the *New York Times*. Moreover, each of the mini-chapters says much the same thing, that quantum physics makes anything possible if you wish for it long and hard enough.

To justify such a tiny book selling for \$12.95 Chopra inserted "A note from the Author: the material in this book is extremely concentrated and has to be literally metabolized and experienced in the consciousness of the reader ... Upon completing the book, start again. Make this a lifelong habit and wealth in all its forms will follow you wherever you go."

Like a laundry detergent or frozen fruit juice, you pay more for this fairy tale because it is concentrated. Notice how Chopra uses "metabolized" in a way that scientists who study metabolism every day would never use the word. He does this with energy, quantum and other scientific terms through all his books, tapes and

seminars. This deception by mystification of science is clever sophistry. It is his whole shtick and Americans fall for it.

Actions speak louder than words, no matter how clever sounding they may be, and Chopra's actions provide a much better lesson on creating wealth than the book. The lesson is this: Americans are huge suckers for "ancient Eastern wisdom," especially when presented with a veneer of pseudoscience. Any Indian with a glib tongue and some facility with scientific jargon can fool and exploit millions of Americans. He can promise them the moon and they will believe, and they will pay a premium price for every scrap of paper bearing his words of wisdom.

Also, because of their childish love of things magical and their fear of the power of science, many Americans enjoy being told that their great heritage of modern science is inferior to India's legacy of godmen and miracle makers.

The cynical American media are eager to provide a fortune in free promotional publicity to this type of godman. Chopra is one of the darlings of the American media, among the most sacred of the New Age sacred cows. For years he has had an open invitation from just about every television talk show in the country, and has appeared on dozens. No matter how farfetched and ludicrous his claims, he is treated like a saint and never seriously questioned. Moreover, his critics are shunned and blackballed by the media.

In my book on alternative medicine I challenged Chopra to undergo some reality testing: show me one person who can levitate and I will donate the royalties from this book to Maharishi International University or the American Association for Ayurvedic medicine. The demonstrator need not even fly or levitate. All he has to do is sit on an industrial or veterinary scale and decrease his body weight by 5 percent for fifteen seconds using mental power alone. He will have one full hour to accomplish the feat. All I asked was that one TMer do 5 percent of what Chopra says thousands do as a matter of habit, but he ignored the challenge.

The book was sent to more than one hundred mass media outlets, including every national talk show that has featured Chopra, and I made myself available to the shows and all reporters. Not one of them wanted to talk to me about it, even after follow-up letters and faxes emphasizing the challenge. Not one! There are scores of other Chopra critics in the scientific community, including physicians and quantum physicists, but corporate media don't want the public to hear what they have to say.

It is abundantly clear, and I can say this without fear of a libel lawsuit, that Deepak Chopra is either delusional or a liar. Since neither he nor anyone else can levitate and fly as he claims, there can be no other conclusion. This is just one obvious

example of his delusional or dishonest nature. There are many others. Someday the media will have to explain why their relationship with him is like that of a yapping gaggle of obedient lap dogs to a sacred cow. It's a disgusting abdication of professional responsibility and a symptom of the irrationalism endemic to the business these days.

Another alternative medicine advocate who has achieved sacred cow status with the media is "Dr." Earl Mindell. A charlatan and hoaxer if there ever was one, he bills himself as "the world's most trusted health professional." He has a phony PhD in nutrition and on that basis calls himself Doctor. Like Chopra, he has an open invitation on dozens of major and minor radio and television talk shows. He brags that he appears on about 350 talk shows each year, about one per day.

His hosts call him "Dr. Mindell" and his audience asks him all kinds of nutritional and medical questions. His books are nothing more than false and fraudulent advertisements for the scores fraudulent remedies sold by health fraud stores like the chain he started. But the media love him and give him every opportunity to promote his swill. They give me and other critics of quackery combined less than 5% of the time they give this one quack.

Another sacred cow of the postmodern media is Andrew Weil, MD, the Tim Leary of the alternative medicine movement. His claims about the power of the mind to cure diseases are similar to those of Deepak Chopra, though his delusions are derived from ingesting hallucinogenic drugs rather than from meditating. He says as much in "A trip to Stonesville," Chapter 7 of his book *The Natural Mind*, in which he extols "stoned thinking" as superior to sober, logical thinking. He does not mind if you call his ideas psychotic because he believes psychotics are the "evolutionary vanguard of our species."

Keep this in mind while reading the next chapter, which poses the question, is "alternative medicine" a new paradigm or a national psychosis?"

### **The Postmodern Journalists' Code of Ethics**

During the pre-FDA days, the hey-days for patent medicines about a century ago, newspapers were very much beholden to the industry and its huge advertising budget. To institutionalize this loyalty the snake oil promoters came up with the "red letter clause" in their long-term contracts with the papers. Printed in red ink to ensure they would not be missed, these paragraphs stated that if laws were passed that inhibited the sale of the snake oils in the newspaper's areas, the contracts would be void. This naturally encouraged the papers to report positive testimonials for the products, spike reports of harm from the products, and editorialize against regulating the products.

This was a shameful time for journalism in America, but far from unique. For several decades newspapers and magazines engaged in self-censorship regarding the harm of tobacco products for fear of losing tobacco-advertising dollars. And now the phenomenon is being repeated with the advent of fraudulent alternative medicine and drugs promoted as nutritional supplements. This time there are many more products and the propaganda is more sophisticated. Moreover, the potential for harm is greater because now, unlike a century ago, it really does matter whether you take a patent medicine from a quack or a proven remedy from a real doctor.

In the Brave New Dark Age the journalists code of ethics is revolutionized by adding one word to the end of each item in the code: “Not!” Like an Orwellian nightmare, our most basic ideals about honesty, responsibility, professionalism, and serving the public are inverted. Bad become good, down becomes up and lies become truth.

Hers is a statement of postmodern journalists’ *de facto* code of ethics, the one that in practice over-rides the general one presented in the Introduction and the official one in the Appendix. This is the ethics code most journalists actually operate by.

The main responsibilities of the postmodern journalists that come with their First Amendment rights and their access to mass media include the following:

- To ignore the truth and to serve the public’s right to be misinformed and deceived;
- To perform with ignorance, arrogance, bias, inaccuracy and unfairness;
- To be engaged in integrity-compromising secondary employment and other conflicts of interest;
- To publicize commercial claims without verification, especially if it is profitable to do so;
- To blur the distinction between news and commentary;
- To rarely correct mistakes;
- To ignore and encourage unethical behavior by other journalists;
- To be unaccountable to anyone and to discourage open dialog with the public.

### [Naturopathy, Nazism and Nicotine](#)

I will close this chapter on dangerous trends in the media and society with a few food-for-thought items. First, the eerie parallels between New Ageism and Nazism.

It is well known that, like today's New Agers, Hitler and his henchmen were fascinated by occultism. Deputy Fuehrer Rudolf Hess, SS head Heinrich Himmler, master occultists of the Third Reich, and many other top Nazis were out to create a new Nazi religion based on ancient pagan ideas, symbols and rituals. Like today's New Agers they spoke of a new mythos (new paradigm) that would dispose of old ways of thinking.

This new way was actually very ancient, a glorious but mythical pagan past. The Nazis idealized Tibet and its people; believed in Atlantis, astrology, divination, and clairvoyance; believed in prophecies by psychics such as Nostradamus; mystified nature and emphasized divine and demonic forces rather than natural forces; emphasized being "spiritual;" and encouraged personality cultism (guru-ism). Does this sound familiar?

Also like our New Agers, the Nazis were drawn to Hinduism. Himmler infused the SS, which was to be the new aristocracy, with Hindu concepts. He traveled with a copy of the Hindu holy text the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and he believed in past lives, karma and reincarnation. Like Shirley MacLaine, he knew his previous incarnations. One was medieval King Heinrich, a great warrior and national hero.

Consider, too, the familiar words of one prominent alternative medicine advocate. He demanded that the revolution replace modern chemical medicine and its mechanistic thinking with an organic, holistic medicine. He wanted to bring back homeopathy, herbalism and other traditional healing techniques. This medical reformer was German natural healer Karl Kotschau in the 1930s, and the revolution that he promoted was the Nazi revolution.

The Nazis resurrected medieval German alchemist Paracelsus to help promote holistic naturopathy, and Paracelsus is a favorite of today's New Agers. In fact, Germany is the source of a remarkable number of the most delusional and fraudulent alternative medicines, including naturopathy, magnetic healing, homeopathy, orgonomy, aromatherapy, superstition-based herbalism, live cell therapy, electro-dermal screening and many worthless cancer remedies.

I am not saying that the New Age movement will lead to another world war and holocaust, only that its demagogic, mystical, metaphysical, and tyrannical tendencies, along with media and government promotion of antiscientific lies, can lead to no good. Stalin's Lysenko-ism, which devastated Soviet agricultural and medical sciences for decades, and Mao's Great Leap Forward with its resurrection of traditional Chinese medicine and disastrous industrial and agricultural policies, provide other examples of the catastrophic effects of basing public policy on ideology-driven pseudoscience.

Alternative medicine has some disturbing parallels to another unsavory business, tobacco. Let's consider a few traits common to the tobacco industry and the alternative medicine industry. They both:

- Depend heavily on deceptive advertising;
- Have strong alliances with the mass media and they corrupt the media's approach to issues relating to their products;
- Have long histories of deceiving and defrauding, and conspiring to deceive and defraud, their customers and government agencies;
- Often use hired-gun pseudoscientists and phony research to accomplish the above;
- Believe that warning labels and disclaimers protect them from liability for harm done by their products;
- Claim that their drugs are not drugs;
- Prey on children;
- Hate medical doctors (in fact, tobacco money has been used to promote alternative medicine causes opposed by rational physicians);
- Have powerful lobbies and powerful allies in Congress.

Given these similarities, is it far-fetched to suggest that leaders of the health fraud industries will someday have to sit in the hot seats that have been occupied by tobacco executives for most of the 1990s? Could they not someday be called to account for thousands of casualties and billions of dollars wasted by the public because of their systematic and institutionalized lies? Might they not have to face Congress, judges and juries in a couple decades, in a rerun of today's tobacco wars? I would not rule this out.

Senator Hatch has repeatedly said that people who push drugs on our kids should be locked up and the keys thrown away. I would not rule out that Senator Hatch will someday have to justify his promotion of the unprecedented drugging of health-seeking Americans, including unwitting children, while he wages a "war on drugs" and his Mormon Church forbids even the use of caffeine by its members.

## Chapter Five

### Toward the Post-Millennial Age of Reason

As we approach the year 2,000 the Age of Aquarius is upon us. But how much momentum and staying power does it have? Will it be a centuries-long reign of unreason, analogous to the European Dark Ages after the Greeks and Romans went mystical? Will progress in science and medicine cease while information technology is used mainly for marketing, entertainment and indoctrination?

There will inevitably be a backlash against New Ageism in the form of a Post-Millennial Age of Reason. The question is, will it commence in two or three years and dispatch Aquarius in infancy, or will we take decades and generations to come to our senses?

So far the scientific community seems terribly naïve about the virulence of the New Age Virus. They have failed to recognize and deal with the dirty war the media and postmodern academics in nonscientific and pseudoscientific disciplines have waged against them for many years. Because they lack historical perspective, their century or two of spectacular successes have rendered them complacent and they have not fought back.

However, there are signs of awakening. Dozens of rationalist and anti-health-fraud groups have been active. If these people continue, intensify and expand their excellent work we might begin to see signs of change soon after the turn of the century and millennium. This overhyped event will inevitably be an anticlimax and the mystical hot air balloons, in spectacular formation for years, may start to deflate if a few more holes are poked in them.

On the other hand, if New Ageism survives the postmillennial letdown, we may be in for a long dark night. Therefore, the next three to five years are crucial in this cultural war, this struggle for philosophical control of the steering mechanisms of our society.

The millennial madness has had a great run, primarily because the mass media have relentlessly promoted it, but we cannot afford to let it give birth to the Brave New Dark Age it promises. As we approach the dawn of a new millennium it is time to start sobering up from the long orgy of unreason and prepare to abort the abomination it has conceived.

**[Alternative Medicine: New Paradigm or Media-Induced National Psychosis?](#)**

Are the alternative medicine movement and its lapdogs in the media leading us to a new paradigm that will provide a cornucopia of healing marvels?

Or, is the movement just another chapter in humankind's long history of mass delusions, one that is leading us to a new Dark Age in health care and education?

I recommend a fascinating book written by an Englishman named Charles Mackay a century and a half ago. It is called *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*. It presents vivid accounts of historic follies of entire nations, times when reason was abandoned by all sectors of society, when delusion and illusion ruled the land, and the few dissenters kept their mouths shut or were punished severely.

“In reading the history of nations we find that whole communities suddenly fix their minds upon one object, and go mad in its pursuit; that millions of people become simultaneously impressed with one delusion and run after it, until their attention is caught by some new folly more captivating than the first.”

Similarly, today the media and the masses dash madly from one miracle diet, super supplement, pop psychology fad, alternative medicine scam, space alien delusion and paranormal hoax to another. Critics, rationalist and skeptics are excluded from the discussions, practically banished by the mass media.

Mackay examines the crusades, witch burning, get-rich schemes, and the craze over alchemy for the production of gold and the elixir of immortality. He shows that entire social classes, professions, communities, nations and societies are vulnerable to the grip of mass delusions, even though the individuals appear to be sane.

In the Twentieth Century we have seen social madness in the form of murderous totalitarian states and cults centered on charismatic, psychopathic leaders who enthrall their deluded devotees. Now a cult-like tyranny is looming in the form of the Aquarian Age. Its alternative medicine gurus, holistic health crusaders, anti-aging pill poppers, crystal healers, and psychics, with all their delusions, lies, trickery and sophistry, bear a striking resemblance to the alchemists of the Dark Ages.

The question posed above, whether the alternative medicine movement represents a positive new paradigm or a national psychosis, is worthy of a nation debate. Unfortunately, as I have demonstrated throughout this book, millennial New Ageism has a tyrannical streak common to cult movements, especially in its adherents' loathing of open discussion and their compulsion to suppress and censor

rational and skeptical voices. So far the movement has had its way with the media, and millions, having never heard a dissenting word, have accepted its dogmas.

### Challenging the Foundations of Alternative medicine

Here are the key features of the modes, methods, and philosophies of the alternative and complementary medicine movement now in vogue:

- They are based on pseudoscience, mysticism and magic;
- They evolve only by adding more products and services based on marketability, not proven effectiveness and safety;
- *Caveat emptor*, consumer protection principles do not apply, so let the buyer beware;
- If the risks of a product or procedure are found to exceed the possible benefits, keep selling it anyway;
- Practitioners work alone, with no standards and no quality control;
- “Freedom of choice” means the freedom of practitioners and peddlers to deceive and defraud the public;
- “Holistic” doesn’t mean considering such factors as job stress, relationships and sleep habits; it means selling the client the whole grab bag of fraudulent remedies.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries the alternative medicine movement has provided nothing of concrete and demonstrable benefits other than the financial rewards for those involved in the industry. To compare its accomplishments with those of science-based medicine we would have to compare that nothing-burger to a very long record of successes that would take pages to simply list and not even describe. People ignorant of these successes should educate themselves.

“Alternative medicine” is a strange brew consisting mostly of medieval superstition and bad science fiction. It reminds me of popular movies of the 1950s and ‘60s. In these films everything impossible is made possible by two magic words, “atomic radiation,” which transforms the ordinary into the incredible shrinking man, the giant carnivorous rabbits, the killer tomatoes, and various miraculous powers.

Similarly, now even the most outrageous and monstrous health fraud can be instantly transformed into a wonderful healing method by simply calling it

“alternative medicine.” Such is the power of the current psychological-cultural plague, the New Age virus sweeping the nation.

In reality, there is good medicine, bad medicine, and experimental medicine. Either we know it works, we know it does not work, or we don't know whether it works. It is self-evident that all purported healing and preventive products and services can be categorized as proved, disproved, or still experimental. Rational medicine uses proved and experimental remedies. When the latter are used there is generally informed consent and proper experimental protocol.

Alternative medicine, on the other hand, uses disproved and experimental remedies that it falsely claim are proven safe and effective. There is no informed consent or proper experimental protocol.

The terms alternative medicine, complementary medicine, holistic medicine and natural medicine are NewAgeSpeak that gives privileged status to certain products and services and exempts them from the normal scrutiny. Practitioners and advocates use the terms to squirm out of accountability and place their systems beyond reality testing.

At first advocates of a certain nostrum may claim to have scientific proof and whine about evil forces conspiring to suppress their miracle cure. But as the evidence against the remedy becomes overwhelming, they claim that the methods cannot be tested scientifically because they belong to a different paradigm and must be experienced and accepted on faith to work properly.

Americans have a long tradition of separating matters of faith from matters of science and medicine, so this is an Aquarian Age leap of faith. If we take that leap (and we are now jogging toward the cliff) we can look forward to a health care system that adopts methods and medicines based on ideology, metaphysics, dogma, delusion, guru-ism, and politics rather than science.

Millions of purveyors of snake oils and ritualistic systems will compete for health care dollars not on the strength of the evidence of effectiveness that they provide, but on the persuasiveness of their sophistry, the power of their demagoguery, their financial resources, and their political connections.

Advances in science-based medicine have been possible because the system is open to innovation, and remedies based on good evidence are rarely ignored or scoffed at for long. But alternative medicine is a mosaic of tired old dogmas, delusions and deceptions, each periodically dusted off and dressed up with a new coat of glittering gibberish. Innovation is limited to dreaming up new scams. The

most significant recent innovation is the plethora of new or recycled snake oils masquerading as nutrients.

In legitimizing separate but equal healing systems, are we not in danger of institutionalizing fundamentally flawed and fraudulent pseudo-professions? And have we not already done so with the licensing of fringe health care systems, some with alternative physiologies as remote from reality as a green-cheese moon?

It would seem obvious that rational reform of health care must be in the direction of tightening up on competency requirements, weeding out quackery and fraud, and improving consumer protection. But the leaders of the alternative medicine industry want to do the opposite. They are not reformers; they are buccaneer entrepreneurs and nihilists. They aim to open the floodgates and let all pretenders prey on the public.

Rationalists reject this new paradigm, oppose granting sacred cow status to pseudoscience, and insist that every healing method must be scrutinized and judged. Our main investigative tool is simple reality testing. We look at the issues the way courts of science and courts of law have, ideally would, or will when they are finally forced to.

Someday the practitioners and others who perpetrate organized health fraud on us will be confronted in courts of science and courts of law. Like the tobacco industry executives now in the hot seat, the leaders of the fraudulent alternative medicine industries and those who teach the rackets at cult colleges and diploma mills will be called to account for their systematic deceptions.

For starters they will have to justify their deceptive promotion of psychoactive and other herbal drugs to children and adults as nutritional supplements – a massive fraud reminiscent of the one perpetrated by the tobacco peddlers, but more successful. Then they will have to explain why state and federal governments should subsidize pseudoscientific frauds (such as chiropractic and naturopathy) and religions (such as traditional Chinese medicine and Ayurvedic medicine) through student loans, Medicare reimbursements for the bogus treatments, and so on. Eventually the regulators, legislators and courts will have to face the truth, even if the media and their mobs refuse to.

### **Pearls of Wisdom or Goat Droppings?**

In this chapter we rate alternative medicine nostrums on a scale from -3 (worst) to +3 (best). Zero indicates that we do not yet have enough information to make a decision. It is a mathematically neutral rating, but it should be taken as a negative by consumers since the burden of proof is on those proffering a remedy. In this

business, unlike in criminal law, an experimental remedy must be assumed guilty, that is, possibly hazardous and probably worthless, unless proved innocent, that is, safe and effective. This is the minimalist approach and it favors the consumer and client.

Alternative medicine takes the opposite approach. Its advocates assume that effective remedies are easy to come by and almost all remedies ever marketed are effective as advertised unless proved otherwise and even then they still market them. Their interventionist “holism” is a maximalist shotgun approach that includes lots of zeroes and negatives on our ratings scale. Holistic and alternative practitioners, especially naturopaths and chiropractors who bill themselves as “eclectic physicians,” are mostly opportunists happy to sell their customers anything they might fall for.

Imagine a set, or list, that includes all the remedies ever used by all the societies that ever existed from the dawn of humanity, for all the symptoms and illnesses ever experienced. It is indisputable that the overwhelming majority of them, probably more than 99 percent, are worthless for their purported uses. This huge set of all remedies can be likened to a mountain of hundreds of thousands of goat droppings (dark green-brown little balls) with a few hundred pearls – effective remedies – scattered among them.

The odds have always been heavily against any new remedy proving in the long run to be safe and effective, even if plausible theories seem to support it. In the case of scurvy, for example, hundreds of remedies were advocated and tried over centuries before the only effective one, foods containing vitamin C, was proven.

The assumption of guilt and the requirement of proof are fundamental to progress in medical science and consumer protection in health care, and they are precisely what alternative medicine wants to destroy. If there is one characteristic that defines the alternative medicine movement and is common to its many practitioners and advocates, this is it.

Where medical scientists see piles of manure, alternative practitioners see pearls of wisdom and piles of money. In fact, in Ayurveda, among the trendiest of alternative medicines, goat dung and other fecal matter are traditional medicines that have been used for centuries, and so is urine. Such ingredients have also shown up in homeopathy, traditional Tibetan medicine, and other healing systems and cults popular with New Agers.

The mass media have been almost unanimous in their uncritical promotion of the gamut of alternative medicine. They have led the charge, so if we are heading to an era of New Age medical miracles, we know who to thank. On the other hand, if we

are plunging into a Brave New Dark Age in which mountains of manure become official medicines, we know who to blame.

As you will see from the ratings, it appears that we are taking a dive into a dung heap. One purpose of this book is to hold the mass media accountable, at least for the historical record. Someday honesty and realism will come back into fashion.

### **Reality Testing: Rating the Most Common Alternative Medicines**

Rating dozens of remedies on a risks-vs-benefits scale is a complex task and would be impossible without certain limitations and caveats. First, we do not take financial cost into account. The cost of a product or service is relative to one's financial resources, so we have to leave consideration of that factor to each individual. We do occasionally comment on cost, but even then it does not figure into the ratings (scores).

Second, for similar reasons we do not take time into consideration. It may be a crucial factor for busy people considering time-consuming therapies and inconvenient life-style changes, but people have to factor in such factors for themselves.

Third, the hazards we consider in estimating risk factors include direct harm only and not the danger of diversion from proper treatment, which is always more serious in the more serious treatable illnesses. Trying to include this for each remedy would lead to impossible consequences since many purported remedies are used for dozens of problems from pimples to cancer. We would simply end up with ratings based on the potential severity of the diseases treated. Therefore, our ratings generally do not include the risk of diversion from proper treatment and readers must figure in this factor for themselves.

However, there is an exception to this. In rating methods that inevitably, routinely, or as a matter of definition and policy, divert patients from proven treatments for serious health problems, interact badly with necessary medications, or otherwise actively interfere with proper care, this hazard is included in estimating the risk. Most fraudulent diagnostic systems are in this category.

Does the alternative medicine movement represent a new paradigm or is it a national psychosis? If the ratings of most of the methods, as well as the over-all average, end up on the positive side of the ledger, it will be fair to say we have a new paradigm. But if most are rated zero or negative, and the average score is negative, it would appear we are afflicted with a national psychosis.

As you will see from the scores based on the information available as we go to press, it would be foolish to bet on a new paradigm. But millions of Americans, egged on by the mass media, are doing just that and they often bet their lives.

Along with the ratings, we provide very brief introductions and comments about the products, services or systems in question. We do not describe them in detail, nor all the claims made for them. This would take up too much space for information that is available elsewhere including in books and articles by myself and other rationalist critics.

Note to fellow skeptics and anti-health-fraud activists who know more than I: I intend this set of ratings as a starting point and a template for the kind of realistic rating or scoring system that honest journalists (the rebels of the profession) and the general public need. Feel free to build on or modify my system, or to propose other rating methods, systems and results.

### [Guide to the Ratings](#)

We rate each remedy or system on a scale from -3 (worst) to +3 (best). In a few cases fractional scores, such as +1.5 are given. Here is what the rating scores mean.

+3 = very effective relative to risk

+2 = moderately effective relative to risk

+1 = slightly effective relative to risk

0 = experimental, rating pending

-1 = ineffective, with little or no risk

-2 = ineffective, with moderate risk

-3 = ineffective, with serious risk

The modes and methods we give positive ratings to are good medicines when used properly because their possible benefits exceed their risks. The greater the benefits relative to the risks, the higher the score. But those rated negative are bad medicines because their risks exceed their benefits. The greater the risks relative to the benefits, the lower the score.

I must emphasize that these ratings are not made in comparison to more conventional methods and medicines. They do not take into consideration the possible availability of better treatments, so that even a +3 rating does not necessarily mean it is the treatment of choice in a given case. If we rate a method

positive, we recommend you do not use it for anything serious, or in lieu of your physician's advice, without consulting him or her.

The conclusions and ratings are not written in stone but are based on the best currently available information. Firm support for them can be found in the health care literature cited in books by Stephen Barrett, MD; William Jarvis, PhD; Victor Herbert, MD, and nutritionists Jack Raso and myself. I believe the conclusions represent the consensus views of rational, responsible professionals and experts who have taken the time to investigate the issues.

### **The Overall Score as We Go to Press**

There's no need to do all the math. It is clear at a glance that the great alternative medicine revolution is mostly nonsense and fraud. Has a greater wasteland ever been embraced as the promised land by a society inflicted with media-driven mass delusions?

In this sampling of about 100 systems, methods and medicines we have rated only ten higher than zero. Eight are rated 0. The rest are rated -1 to -3. This is about a 10 percent positive rating and 80% negative rating for alternative medicine as a whole.

If we were to individually rate the hundreds of worthless homeopathic drugs, herbal drugs, extreme diets, megavitamin and mineral formulations, amino acids concoctions, assorted cancer nostrums, and the scores of bogus diagnostic and treatment methods of chiropractors, acupuncturists and naturopaths, the overall score would be far more dismal.

### **The Individual Scores**

(Arranged alphabetically by method or system)

#### **Acupuncture, Traditional**

According to acupuncture theory, the functioning of the organs and the coordination of their activities is sustained and driven by chi, a purported life energy that flows through channels called meridians. The chi can be magnified, minimized and directed by fine needles inserted into the meridians at specific tiny points on the skin. Moving chi around the meridians and to and from various organs with the needles is a fundamental part of traditional Chinese medicine.

As the media constantly remind us, this great science is thousands of years old, so it must be valid. Never mind that this means it is literally Stone Age medicine.

The existence of the meridians and energy has never been proved, and there is no agreement about the number or even the location of acupuncture points. Only a handful of the hundreds of applications are supported by some evidence and even that is not very convincing. Moreover, the applications are symptomatic and relatively trivial.

Nevertheless, acupuncture and other practices of traditional Oriental medicine are becoming entrenched and institutionalized as yet another “separate but equal” healing systems with access to billions of health care dollars. Following the lead of chiropractic, the industry is using political rather than scientific methods to achieve its goals.

Rating for a few minor physical/psychosomatic symptoms: +.5

Rating for serious and systemic illness: -1

Rating for use as an anesthetic in major surgery: - 2.5

### **Acupuncture, Science-based**

The precise insertion of needles, with or without electrical stimulation, can influence nerves, muscles, and their junctures, and thereby affect pain, inflammation, mobility and other functions. This evidence-based use of needles and electrodes, in modern Eastern and Western medicine, does not rely on theories involving meridians and the flow of chi, and it should not be confused with traditional Chinese acupuncture.

Average Rating for common applications = + 1.5

### **Aloe Vera Gel, fresh**

Gel, or mucilage, from fresh cut leaves is used externally for minor abrasions, scrapes, burns and irritations.

Rating for external use: + 1

Fresh aloe gel is also mixed into drinks and consumed as a cure-all. A powerful cathartic is often present in the gel from the latex (see below). Severe diarrhea can result.

Rating for internal use: -1

### **Aloe Vera Gel, commercial**

The supposedly stabilized gel of the plant is mixed into creams, lotions, ointments, and the like. But cell culture studies have shown a toxic rather than healing effect.

Stabilization of the effective component(s), as yet unidentified, is apparently difficult.

Rating for external use: -1

Commercial drinks containing the gel, sometimes erroneously called juice, has been promoted as a cure for dozens of minor and serious symptoms and diseases.

Rating for internal use: -1

The gel has been injected intravenously as a cancer remedy. This does not work and has killed several people.

Rating for use by injection: -3

### **Aloe Vera Latex (evaporated juice)**

This product is extracted from the leaves after removal of the gel. It is usually dehydrated, leaving a latex that is a powerful laxative sometimes used on horses. It has no other proven effects, but is fraudulently promoted for a wide variety of health problems.

Rating for internal use: -1.5

### **Amino Acid Supplements**

There are many amino acid supplement products, both isolated and mixed. Many health and medical claims are made for them relating to insomnia, depression, virus infections, appetite control, weight loss, muscle building, and so on. Evidence for most of the claims is very poor and regular use of the products is probably more hazardous than generally realized. Because amino acids compete for absorption and interfere with each other's absorption, as well as for other reasons, taking them in concentrated, isolated form probably does more harm than good.

Average rating for most applications: -2

### **Applied Kinesiology (AK)**

According to the theory, disease in vital organs is associated with weakness in supposedly corresponding muscles. People trained in AK, mostly chiropractors and naturopaths, can detect the weakness and thereby diagnose illnesses, nutritional deficiencies and allergies to foods, drugs, chemicals, fabrics, and so on. They subjectively gauge muscle strength as various substances are placed in the client's hand, on her tongue, or in contact with another part of her body. This is fantasy medicine based on magical thinking. It does not stand up to reality testing.

Rating: -2

### **Aromatherapy**

Aromatic oils from herbs and resins are diluted with vegetable oils and rubbed on the skin or held to the nose so vapors are smelled and inhaled. Various oils are alleged to have a variety of therapeutic effects. The claims are far-fetched and not supported by good evidence.

Rating = -1

### **Astrology**

Holist healing is not complete without consideration of the horoscope. The precise arrangement of the heavens at the moment of birth affects susceptibility to physical and mental disorders. Therefore, prescriptions for diet, herbs, and holistic treatments are made on the basis of the horoscope and the current state of the heavens.

Ratings = -2

### **Ayurveda**

This is an eclectic system of Indian healing based on divine revelations recorded in ancient sacred Hindu texts. It includes body-type and pulse diagnoses as the bases for prescriptions of diet, massage, special baths, herbal drugs, detoxifying chants and rituals, emetics, laxatives, sweating, and enemas of water, oil, and animal body fluids and parts.

Rating = -2

### **BHT**

Butylated hydroxyl-toluene, or BHT, is an antioxidant widely used as a food preservative. The small doses used in foods are harmless, but large doses have killed experimental animals. Foods containing BHT have always been shunned by the health fraud stores and “CONTAINS NO PRESERVATIVES” is an essential password for packaged foods seeking a place on their shelves. But after Pearson and Shaw’s book *Life Extension* recommended huge doses as a herpes remedy, some of these same stores started selling BHT in pills that deliver doses thousands of times those commonly found in some foods. Toxicity has landed some users in hospitals.

Rating for medicinal purposes: -2.5

### **Biofeedback**

Biofeedback devices of various types measure pulse rate, muscle tension, brain waves and the like. This helps the subject control certain physiological functions and thereby relax, which helps in conditions aggravated by tension and stress such as insomnia, pain, anxiety and psychosomatic digestive problems. It may also prove useful in certain cases of epilepsy, Parkinson's disease and heart arrhythmia.

Critics say the growing use of biofeedback is unnecessary gadgeteering in many cases. The challenge to biofeedback therapists is to show that their results are superior to those achieved by relaxation techniques without the expensive machines.

Rating: +1.5

### **Blood Type Diet**

This concept is a corollary of the theories presented in Simon & Schuster's hoax book *You Are Your Blood Type* by Toshitaka Nomi and Alexander Beshner. See the hoax book *Eat Right for Your Type: 4 Blood Types, 4 Diets* in Chapter Two. Written by naturopath Peter D'Adamo, it is popular with naturopaths and other phony nutritionists.

Rating: -2.5

### **Blood Type Psychology**

The trendy question in Japan is not, what's your sign? It's, what's your blood type? Are you type A? Then you must be industrious, compliant and patriotic. Are you type B? Then you are passionate and creative. And so on for scores of blood types and subtypes.

This absurd concept originated during World War II in the Japanese military, and has a potential for social engineering atrocities and irrational discrimination in education, employment and business. It has been popularized by the hoax book *You are Your Blood Type* by Toshitaka Nomi and Alexander Beshner.

Rating: -2.5

### **Body Contour Potions and Body Wraps**

Dissolve fat away by rubbing various potions on your skin. Herbs and vitamins are rubbed all over your body, and you are wrapped up like a mummy for a while. You lose several pounds per hour and many inches from your waist, thighs and butt. Or so the fraudulent ads claim.

Rating: -1

## **Cancer Treatment Alternatives**

There are scores of alternative cancer treatments. Special diets and foods, vitamins, herb, fasting, high colonics (enema), ozone, oxygen, animal parts and tissues, chiropractic and psychological manipulations, physical and mental exercises, homeopathic preparations, enzymes, laetrile and a variety of other chemicals are promoted and peddled as “natural, holistic’ remedies.

Shark and bovine cartilage is highly publicized and very profitable these days. The deceptive claim is that sharks do not get cancer, therefore taking shark cartilage pills prevents and cures cancer. But shark cartilage is expensive, so the cheaper bovine cartilage is a reasonable alternative. These lies and non-sequiturs are the basis of a multi-billion-dollar scam that illustrates the sociopathic nature of the snake oil industries and the limitless gullibility of the public.

In fact, sharks do get cancer, even cancer of the cartilage. And even if they did not, and even if this were due to something in the cartilage, oral consumption would destroy the active component. Even if it did not, there is no reason to think it would work in humans. The shark cartilage scam is wreaking havoc on shark populations worldwide. The bovine cartilage has even fewer lies going for it.

Another fashionable and extremely expensive alternative cancer remedy is so-called anti-neoplastons. According to Stanislaw R. Burzynski, MD, these are substances produced by the body that normalize cancer cells. They are extracted from human urine and synthesized in a laboratory. Patients had spent tens of millions on them for the treatment of cancer, especially brain tumors, before proper trials were begun. Critics claim the very expensive drugs are really just common chemicals available for pennies from chemical wholesalers, and that they do not do anything for cancer patients.

Some alternative cancer remedies are much more dangerous than others. Laetrile, for example, causes cyanide poisoning; some vitamins and minerals appear to stimulate some cancers to grow faster; high colonics and coffee enemas cause electrolyte imbalance and mineral depletion; and some diets cause malnutrition. An even greater danger is that faith in the remedies may lead to diversion from effective treatment long enough for the cancer to spread further.

It is increasingly fashionable to be tolerant of such remedies, especially when rational medicine can provide no further help and the prognosis is grim. This seems akin to throwing terminal patients to the vultures and allowing their bones to be picked clean by peddlers of unwarranted hope, as they lay dying.

Ratings: from -3 for laetrile and coffee enemas to -1 for chlorophyll and homeopathy.

Ratings for any alternative medicine to be used instead of best evidence-based, oncologist-recommended treatment: -3.

### **Carnitine**

This is an amino acid made in the body from other amino acids. Prescription carnitine is useful in rare metabolic and endocrine disorders in which the body does not make enough, and it is standard medicine for these cases. But because it plays a role in fat metabolism, supplementation is hyped as a fitness booster, weight control aid, fat burner, and energy enhancer. There is no truth to the claims.

Rating: -1

### **Carnivora**

This is a patented extract of Venus' flytrap, the insect-eating plant. A German physician administered it to cancer patients and claimed favorable results, but these have not been verified. The tabloid press touted it as a miracle cancer cure, but cancer specialists consider it an expensive scam. The fad is also a threat to the survival of the rare species in the wild.

Rating: -1.5

### **Catalyst-Altered Water**

Retired mining professor John Willard added a little castor oil, Epsom salt, sodium meta-silicate and calcium chloride to water, and sold it as a cure for all diseases of humans, animals and even plants. This "Willard's Water" or "Catalyst-Altered Water" was said to increase the life span of cells and promoted as an anti-aging miracle. This is old-time panacea peddling reminiscent of the earliest heydays of the patent medicine industry. However the promotion was not sophisticated enough to escape legal problems, which led to its demise. It is enshrined here more as a classic, a historical example, than a current concern.

Rating: -1

### **Cell Salts**

Would you believe that a single grain of common table salt can cure headaches, depression, anemia, allergies and other symptoms and disorders? Do you think that tiny amounts of other ordinary substances widely available in the diet, such as magnesium, phosphorous and potassium, can cure what ails you? They can if they

are put into little pills, given Latin names, and called cell salts or tissue salts. Or so the silly claims go.

Rating: -1

### **Cell Therapy**

A series of injections of fetal lamb cells is supposed to cure a variety of diseases and neurological disorders, and even to reverse aging itself. There is no good theory to support the practice and no evidence that it works. It is very expensive and carries a risk of infection, pain, fever, allergy and arthritis.

Rating: -2

### **Chelation Therapy**

This is a series of intravenous injections of EDTA, each taking several hours. This chelating agent, which is effective at removing toxic metals from the body, is purported to break up and help remove atherosclerotic plaques from blood vessels and thereby relieve angina and reduce the risk of stroke and heart attack. The treatment is also used for Alzheimer's disease, cancer, multiple sclerosis, arthritis and many other disorders. There is no good evidence for the claims and the treatment may be harmful

Rating, average for all uses: -1.5

### **Chiropractic**

This is the most deeply entrenched and costly of the legalized, institutionalized, organized health frauds. The century-old chiropractic dogma that subluxations (pinched nerves due to spinal misalignment) cause and aggravate every disease known to man and animal has been thoroughly disproved. The very existence of the lesions has not been proved and there are no standard and verifiable diagnostic criteria for them. Nevertheless, the dogma is still taught at most chiropractic colleges and thousands of chiropractors continue to sell the lie to millions of clients. Taxpayers and buyers of insurance (car, health, etc) pick up most of the tab.

The vigorous spinal manipulations that supposedly correct the subluxations can cause moderate to severe injuries, including bruises, strains, broken backs and necks, and strokes due to bruising of the carotid artery. Though such cases are rare, paralysis and death are very real risks and much too great for the unlikely benefits.

Most chiropractors eventually figure out that spinal manipulations alone cannot generate enough revenues to pay off their student loans and to live the good life.

So they branch out into a tremendous array of quackery such as high colonics, weight-loss schemes, homeopathy, megavitamins, herbs and herbal extracts, and bizarre diagnostic methods and gadgets.

Chiropractic is not completely bogus. There is some evidence that carefully done manipulations can help in certain pain syndromes. But such practices are not unique to chiropractors. Massage therapists, osteopaths, medical doctors, nurses, and physical therapists also use them. Most of what is unique to chiropractic is bogus.

Rating for systemic diseases: -3

Rating for headaches: -2

Rating for some types of musculoskeletal pain: +1.5

### **Chlorophyll**

This is the green pigment that plants use to trap energy from sunlight in photosynthesis. This seemingly miraculous power has inspired mystics and quacks to attribute amazing healing properties to chlorophyll. It is deceptively promoted for the treatment of hypertension, ulcers, infections, arthritis, allergies and dozens of other symptoms and disorders.

Rating: -1

### **Chondroitin Sulfate**

This supplement is alleged to be a remedy for osteoarthritis, especially in conjunction with supplements of glucosamine sulfate. It is a component of joint cartilage, which is eroded and shredded by the disease. So it makes some theoretical sense to increase the blood and tissue levels of the material to generate more cartilage and heal the joints. However, there is no proof that ingested chondroitin is absorbed, reaches the target tissues and stimulates their repair.

Rating: 0

### **Chromium Picolinate**

This is a patented chromium-containing supplement alleged to promote fat metabolism and muscle building. The evidence does not support the claims.

Rating: -1

### **Clinical Ecology**

According to clinical ecologists (mostly unorthodox MDs, chiropractors and naturopaths) many people are allergic to scores or hundreds of things that almost no one else is allergic to. They have “environmental illness” or “multiple chemical sensitivity” and are known as “universal reactors” with “hypersensitivity syndrome.” They suffer fatigue, heart palpitations, respiratory and abdominal symptoms, mood disorders, and even psychotic episodes. However, standard allergy tests do not show the alleged allergies; experts reject the theory; and clinical ecologists often misdiagnose infections, hormonal disorders, malnutrition, psychosomatic ailments, and emotional disorders as environmental illness.

Rating: -2

### **Coenzyme Q-10**

This substance is produced by the body and may play a role in preventing atherosclerosis by slowing oxidation of blood fats. It may also be beneficial in congestive heart failure. Supplements are used to prevent and treat these circulatory system problems.

Critics say oral supplements are destroyed by digestion. Others say they are dangerous to some people. The objections cannot both be right. These questions must be answered: do supplements increase blood levels and, if so, does this do any good?

Rating: 0

### **Colloidal Minerals**

Colloidal silver and other mineral and metal suspensions are promoted as immune enhancers, antibiotics, cancer and AIDS remedies, diabetes treatments and more. Frequent consumption of silver can cause permanent discoloration of the skin, which becomes ashen-gray. Other metals and minerals in the mix may cause other problems. There is no evidence for the claims.

Rating: -2

### **Colonic Lavage (Enema Therapy)**

This is a mega-enema, five to twenty gallons of water infused into the colon to wash out its contents. Usually a series of treatments is given over several days or weeks. This is supposed to relieve a wide range of symptoms and diseases such as headaches, colds, flu, sexual dysfunction, depression, digestive problems, poor circulation, drug addiction, and parasite infestation. It can make you look younger, feel more energetic, and lose weight. Oxygen is sometimes added to the water, and black coffee is often used instead of water.

This is clearly a sexual experience for many devotees, and it has no proven health benefits. The significant risks include distension of the colon leading to chronic constipation; contraction of parasites from previous clients due to improper maintenance of the equipment, which has killed several people; and loss of potassium leached out by the coffee, which has also proved lethal in some.

Rating: -2.5

### **Colostrum**

This is the antibody-laden fluid secreted during the first few days of breast-feeding. Desiccated bovine colostrum in pills and powders has been promoted as a remedy for infections, autoimmune disorders and cancer. It's a lot of bull, but probably not harmful.

Rating: -1

### **Comfrey**

A poultice of this herb is used for skin ulcers, burns, infections and the like. The tea has long been recommended for the treatment of many symptoms and diseases. There is no evidence of benefit and some strains of the plant contain liver toxins and carcinogens.

Rating for external use: 0

Rating for internal use: -2.5

### **Cranial Sacral Therapy and Neural Organization Technique**

According to cranial osteopathy theory, popular with chiropractors, the brain beats rhythmically once every five to six seconds. This natural pulsation is unrelated to heart beat, and any interference with it can lead to all kinds of physical and mental disorders. Manipulation of allegedly misaligned skull bones can stop the interference and cure the problems. A related chiropractic method, neural organization technique (NOT) involves painful manipulation of skull bones to free up blockages in the flow of cerebrospinal fluid and thereby cure epilepsy, dyslexia, Down's syndrome and other neurological disorders. This is fantasy medicine.

Rating: -2.5

### **Crystal Healing**

More than just meditation aids, quartz, topaz and other types of crystals are said to emit healing energies that are beneficial for whatever ails you. Crystal healers say they can detect and direct these energies.

If crystals emit endogenous energy it must be due to nuclear decay, or radioactivity, which we know is harmful rather than healing. No other endogenous energy emits from rocks. My challenge to crystal healers is to show that the purported energies are not from nuclear decay, and can be detected, measured, and directed by man or machine.

One simple test would be to show that one can detect the presence of a crystal near any part of the body without seeing it. And if successful, then do proper studies to show that the energies are healing. Until these things are done it is fair to consider this to be typical New Age delusion and fraud.

Rating: -1

### **Cytotoxic Testing**

White blood cells are placed on slides with dried food extracts on them. If the cells disintegrate or change shape allergy is diagnosed. The theory makes no sense and the test is worthless.

Rating: -2

### **DHEA**

Dehydroepiandrosterone is a powerful steroid hormone produced in the adrenal cortex from cholesterol. Besides having potent effects of its own, it is a precursor of testosterone and estrogen. Studies on thousands of rodents and a few humans have led to exaggerated claims about DHEA being a miracle cure for a myriad of health problems. However, like all powerful hormones, it poses serious risks.

Although the jury is out on the claims, and although DHEA is not found in foods, the law allows the hormone to be sold as a nutritional supplement.

Rating: -2

### **Dental Amalgam Phobia and Removal**

There are toxins in our food, water, and air, we are constantly told. Now an insidious poison has been found right in our mouths, in the carefully crafted mercury-containing fillings in our teeth. Taking them out and replacing them with nonmetallic composites, an expensive proposition, is said to cure and prevent many disease, especially nervous system disorders. In reality, the mercury in amalgam is

tightly bound to the other materials in the fillings and it does not increase blood or tissue levels.

Rating: -2

### **Detoxification**

Toxins in the body cause all disease. Toxins can be removed from the body by several detoxification methods. Therefore, these methods can prevent and cure all diseases. This syllogism is basic to so-called natural medicine, much of which is centuries old. No attempt is made to identify the toxins or show that the procedures do cause them to be eliminated from the body. The treatments include fasting, sweating, enemas, laxatives, vomiting, just about any way of removing fluids and their contents from the body.

Rating: -2

### **Electro-Dermal Screening (EDS)**

Also called electro-diagnosis, EDS uses a galvanometer to measure differences in electrical potential between dozens of points on the skin. These measurements are used to diagnose illnesses, locate internal lesions, and prescribe treatments. Most practitioners are chiropractors, naturopaths, homeopaths and acupuncturists. Electro-acupuncture by Voll (EAV) is one of the most widely used of these fraudulent systems. The Intero is one of the more common devices.

Rating: -2

### **Echinacea**

The root of the purple cone flower plant has been marketed in America for about a century as a cure-all, especially an anti-infective. There is no evidence for most applications, but it does appear to be an immuno-stimulant. It may or may not help to combat respiratory infections, or applied locally to promote wound healing. It may aggravate autoimmune disorders and should be avoided by those with rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, multiple sclerosis and the like, at least until more is known.

Rating: 0

### **Fasting**

Stop eating for one to several days to detoxify and cleanse your system. This is supposed to promote recovery from dozens of ailments and generally strengthen the body. But, in reality, fasting causes the breakdown of muscle tissue and

protein, and inhibits liver function, which results in accumulation of metabolic toxins. The real effect of fasting is the exact opposite of what its advocates claim.

Rating: -1 to -3, depending on the extent of starvation.

### **Feingold Diet**

According to Benjamin Feingold, MD, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children is caused by idiosyncratic reactions of the brain to certain chemicals in the diet, some naturally present and some added. Food colors and natural salicylates are said to be the main culprits. Dietary restrictions allegedly improve behavior. Careful, properly controlled studies generally refute the claims.

Rating: -1.5

### **Flower Essence Remedies**

Edward Bach, a British physician, claimed he could divine the pharmacological effects of flowers by holding his hand over them. Doing this he came up with 38 Bach Flower Remedies, each a treatment for negative emotions or attitudes such as jealousy, depression, anxiety and shyness. They are made by soaking the flowers in water for a few hours. Moreover, he claimed, since all diseases have their roots in the mind, these remedies also combat physical ills. This is a remarkable example of fantasies and delusions made into a big patent-medicine business.

Rating: -1.5

### **Fluoride Phobia**

Water fluoridation has proved to be one of the most cost-effective public health measures ever devised, and it is supported by hundreds of public health, medical and dental organizations around the world. The campaign of lies against it has cost billions of dollars and untold suffering.

Irrational fear of fluoride is an integral part of the alternative medicine movement. In a business where ten times the RDA is considered deficient for many nutrients, fluoride is the only nutrient so vilified. Quacks want you to believe that the “establishment” would poison your water so that you will be suspicious of all its medicines and public health measures, and you will rely on them for health services and products.

Rating: -3

### **GHB and GHL (Gamma Hydroxybutyrate and Gamma Butyrolactone)**

These powerful drugs have been marketed as dietary supplements for muscle building and stress reduction, and sold in health fraud stores, fitness centers, and on the internet. GHB has become notorious as a date rape drug and GBL has similar potential. The drugs can cause seizures, vomiting, heart dysfunction, unconsciousness, coma and death.

Rating: -3

### **Garlic**

Said to be effective in hypertension, high cholesterol, and bacteria-caused gastritis and ulcers. This culinary herb is consumed in several different forms, which are probably not all equal in effects: raw, cooked, dried, aged, and deodorized pill extracts. It is also sometimes used externally for fungus infections and as a suppository for hemorrhoids. Sorting out the truth about the claims and the preparations will take years. Recent research suggests the claims may be greatly exaggerated if not completely false.

Rating: +.5

### **Germanium**

Long used in electronics, this metallic element has also been promoted as a medicine for decades. A Japanese metallurgist, Kazuhiko Asai, claims he was divinely inspired to synthesize germanium sesquioxide, an organic (carbon-containing) compound he called Ge-132. He claimed it is a true panacea, a nontoxic cure for almost all diseases. It turned out to be toxic to the kidneys and it has no proven healing benefits. When Asai had peptic ulcers he declined medical treatment, which is usually very effective, and took his chances with Ge-132. It did not help and he died a victim of his own delusion, obsession and quackery.

Rating: -2

### **Gerovital (GH3)**

Procaine is a synthetic chemical related to cocaine and an excellent local anesthetic. For unknown reasons, Rumanian physician Anna Aslan injected it into elderly patients with a variety of health problems. She claimed spectacular results, and proclaimed the chemical to be a vitamin (an impossibility since it is synthetic) and a panacea effective in dozens of diseases. For several decades she and others have marketed the drug as an age-reversing miracle. There is no evidence to support the claims, though procaine may be a mild antidepressant.

Rating: -1

## **Gingko Biloba**

This herb is promoted as a memory enhancer for both the healthy and the demented. It is said to reverse brain aging and prolong life. It apparently does enhance cerebral blood flow in the elderly and it might improve their cognitive function somewhat. But it certainly is no cure, nor can it prolong life. Proof is lacking for claims of memory enhancement in healthy people. Much more study is needed, especially regarding effects on blood pressure, interactions with other drugs, and the theoretical possibility of increasing or decreasing the risk of stroke.

Rating: 0

## **Ginseng**

The root of this herbal panacea is promoted as an energizer, memory enhancer, infection fighter, cholesterol reducer and aphrodisiac. It is promoted for the treatment of diabetes, to protect the liver from drugs and toxins, to guard against nuclear radiation injury, and more. The panacea status has its origin in superstition. The root's shape is often humanlike, a sign from God or Nature that it is meant for us to use as a medicine. The more humanlike the shape, the greater the alleged potency and the greater the price. Excessive consumption is toxic. The few good studies that have been done tend to discount the claims.

Rating for use as an energizer: -1

Rating for use as an aphrodisiac: -1

Rating for other uses: 0

## **Glandulars**

These are pills of mostly filler and a few milligrams of powdered animal organs such as gonads, liver, kidney and brain. They are supposed to heal and strengthen one corresponding organs, but it's all superstition and fraud. Glandulars are very popular with chiropractors, naturopaths, homeopaths and health fraud store clerks.

Rating: -1

## **Glucosamine Sulfate**

This supplement is alleged to be a remedy for osteoarthritis, especially in conjunction with supplements of chondroitin sulfate. It is a component of joint cartilage, which is eroded and shredded by the disease. It makes some theoretical sense to increase the blood and tissue levels of the material to generate more cartilage and heal the joints. However, there is no proof that ingested glucosamine

is absorbed, reaches the target tissues and stimulates their repair. After all, eating brain doesn't repair the brain and won't make you smarter.

Rating: 0

### **Hair Analysis**

A hair clipping is analyzed for mineral content. The results are used to diagnose "mineral imbalances" which, the client is told, indicate the presence or likely development of various diseases. The problems can be corrected by taking a large handful of vitamins, minerals and pseudo-nutrients every day. Naturally these are sold by the naturopaths and chiropractors who run the scam.

Rating: -2

### **Herbalism**

This is the belief in medicinal herbs in an irrational, metaphysical way. The herbs were put on earth by God or Nature for our benefit. There is an herbal remedy for just about everything and most herbs are a remedy for something. Herbs are harmless and superior to pharmaceutical drugs, and whole herbs are superior to their isolated components. The uses of herbs can be deduced in various superstitious and mystical ways, including astrology, divine revelation, paranormal insight, and the doctrine of signatures. Once an herbal remedy becomes well known, and especially if it is publicized in a book, it is considered a proven remedy and not questioned.

Rating: -3

### **Herbal Crystallization Analysis**

Lick a glass slide, let it dry, and add a drop or two of copper chloride. Now match the resulting patterns on the slide to such patterns made with infusions of herbs rather than saliva. There are hundreds of these patterns apparently based on the theories of occultist Rudolf Steiner. The theory is irrational and the test is worthless.

Rating: -2

### **Homeopathy**

Both mundane and lethal substances are transformed into miraculous healing potions by the magic of homeopathic preparation. Alternate pounding and diluting, even to the point of zero concentration, is the key to this alchemy. Remedies for every symptom under the sun are prepared this way and every substance under the sun is utilized for the purpose. Homeopathic theory contradicts everything that is

known about chemistry, pharmacology and physiology, and there is no clinical data to support its fantastic claims.

Homeopathic products are analogous to holy water and about as effective. Nevertheless, it is a trendy multi-billion-dollar alternative medicine industry with complete freedom to defraud the public. Naturopaths are heavily trained in this pseudoscience and it constitutes a major portion of their practices. Chiropractors and a handful of MDs also use it. This is not just institutionalized health fraud; it is institutionalized fantasy and delusion.

Rating: -1.5

### **Hydrogen Peroxide**

A 3% solution is an effective cleanser and anti-infective for minor external wounds. There is no approved internal use for medical or health purposes. Nevertheless, various preparations of hydrogen peroxide are promoted as a therapy for cancer, AIDS, arthritis, infections and dozens of other health problems. Patients are told to drink it, bathe in it, inject it and take it by enema.

Rating: -2

### **Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy**

Immersion in high-pressure oxygen is very useful therapy for decompression sickness in divers, carbon monoxide poisoning, severe burns and certain embolisms. However, it is also promoted as a panacea for cancer, arthritis, multiple sclerosis and other diseases, and as a general rejuvenator and anti-aging tool. There is no evidence for these claims. It is ironic that some of the same quacks who peddle this snake oil also peddle antioxidants to undo the harmful effects of excess oxygen.

Rating: -1.5

### **Hypoglycemia Diagnosis and Treatment**

Scores of popular books, none by real endocrinologists, promote the idea that all kinds of common symptoms and diseases are caused by chronically low blood sugar. So many health problems and even behavioral problems, including homicidal rage, have been attributed to hypoglycemia that many holistic healers diagnose the disorder in almost all their clients. Various diets and supplements are prescribed as a cure, but they rarely help. This is one of the great fad diseases of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but it has been largely supplanted in recent years by so-called chronic candida, or yeast allergy.

Rating: -2

### **Ion Generators**

Breathing lots of negative ions is supposed to reduce respiratory illness, improve mood and confer other benefits. Ion generators allegedly fill the air with the ions. The jury is out on both claims.

Rating: 0

### **Iridology**

This is a system of diagnosis based on examination of the irises of the eye, segments of which are supposedly connected to specific organs and limbs. Abnormal patterns, colors, spots and lines indicate disease or injury to corresponding body parts. Nutritional deficiencies, hereditary weaknesses, damage from drugs, and emotional states are diagnosed. Miscellaneous herbs, supplements, homeopathics and other alternative medicines are then prescribed and sold by the iridologist. Chiropractors and naturopaths most commonly run this racket.

Rating: -2

### **Kirlian Photography for Diagnosis**

This is a form of electrophotography developed by a Russian couple named Kirlian. Instead of a camera with a lens focusing light on the film, an alternating electrical current interacts with the object being photographed and this creates a colorful image with ghostly patterns on the film. The image is used to diagnose disease, latent disease, incipient cancer, emotional disturbances, drug abuse, and nutritional deficiencies. Supplements, herbs, homeopathic remedies, acupuncture and other nostrums are then prescribed and peddled as cures. The images are a function of moisture, pressure and other mundane variables, and the claims are entirely fraudulent.

Rating: -2

### **Lecithin**

This is a phospholipid extracted from soybeans and long promoted as a remedy for high cholesterol levels, atherosclerosis, heart disease and dementia. Although there is some rationale for the claims, we still do not know if they are true. However, it has been used for so long we would probably know by now if it was a significant help or harm.

Rating: 0

### **Live Cell Analysis for Diagnosis**

A drop of blood is placed on a slide, magnified by dark-field microscopy, and viewed on a TV monitor. The cells stand out vividly enough to impress the client, who is told that certain alleged abnormalities indicate various diseases and nutritional deficiencies. Assorted supplements, herbs and potions are then prescribed and sold to remedy the problems.

Rating: -2

### **Massage**

There are many methods and styles of massage, but they all have in common the manual manipulation and stimulation of muscles and other tissues. Rubbing, kneading, tapping, stroking, and applying steady pressure are the most common modes of massage.

Rating for relief of mild to moderate soft tissue pain not due to system disease or serious injury: +2

Rating for relief of common headaches: +.5

### **Megavitamins**

Since the 1960s scores of books and hundreds of articles in the mass media have promoted the idea that most diseases can be prevented and treated by enormous doses of various vitamins, which are said to be harmless. Some of the more common megavitamin treatments have been for schizophrenia and other psychoses, colds and other respiratory infections, arthritis, cancers, virus infections, neurological disorders, and heart disease. Corrupt “health journalists” with bogus credentials and ties to the health fraud industry relentlessly expand the deceptions. The claims have been refuted and the treatments are often quite toxic. They sometimes promote the very symptoms and diseases they supposedly prevent and cure.

Rating: -2.5

### **Melatonin**

This hormone produced by the pineal gland has a wide range of effects and is promoted as a sleep aid, cancer preventive and anti-aging miracle. Potential risks are poorly understood, the jury is out on the potential benefits, and it is rarely found in foods. Nevertheless, the law allows it to be sold as a nutritional supplement.

Rating: 0

### **Naturopathy**

This highly eclectic system of “natural medicine” is based on outmoded theories and disproven dogmas. Naturopaths use hundreds of questionable diagnostics, remedies and preventives. See discussion of Ross Trattler’s hoax book in Chapter Two.

Rating: -2.5

### **Orthomolecular Psychiatric Therapy**

The theory is that many psychoses are caused by deficiencies of certain nutrients in people who have abnormally high requirements due to genetic and metabolic defects. So truly massive doses of vitamins and sometimes minerals and amino acids are prescribed and taken for months and years. Various questionable tests are used to diagnose the high requirement. After several decades of these expensive treatments, based on megavitamin theories, there is no evidence of benefit and the supplements are often quite toxic.

Rating: -2.5

### **Pangamic Acid**

Also called Vitamin B-15, this hoax was developed by Ernst T. Krebs, Jr., who also started the laetrile scam. Promoted as a panacea, this fake vitamin is said to cure and prevent cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and dozens of other disorders. Some preparations appear to be carcinogenic.

Rating: -2

### **Radionics**

This is the use of gadgets and objects to detect and direct purported healing energy for the purpose of diagnosis and treatment. From the shamans’ magic wands to pendulums, black boxes, electrical devices, and healing crystals, this is all pure delusion and fraud.

Rating: -2

### **Raw Milk**

Raw milk, a health fraud store staple for decades is promoted as nutritionally superior to pasteurized milk and a remedy for many ailments. But it has no proven nutritional advantages and is hopelessly susceptible to contamination by lethal salmonella and other bacteria. Even after thousands of poisonings and several

deaths, only protracted legal actions by the American Public Health Association and others finally forced the FDA to ban interstate shipment of raw milk. A federal judge ruled that it is inherently dangerous and unsafe for human consumption. However, it is still sold locally in some areas,

Rating: -3

### **Rebirthing**

According to Leonard Orr, inventor of the “rebirthing” system of healing, birth trauma is universal, and it causes most of our physical and mental ills. However, the damage can be undone and the ailments cured by the rebirthing process. This is done in a series of treatments by a “Certified Rebirther” (CR) who leads clients through a process of overheating and hyperventilation which causes fainting and blacking out. Waking up with a gentle loving touch heals the wounds, dissolves the scars of birth trauma and cures the person.

In reality the blacking out is caused by severe restriction of brain blood flow and oxygen starvation. It almost always causes a severe and prolonged headache and can be dangerous to people with hypertension or atherosclerosis. The CRs are unqualified psychotherapists who can harm their clients both physically and emotionally.

Rating: -2.5

### **Spirulina**

Also known as pond scum, this blue-green alga has long been promoted as a perfect food, a source of all required nutrients, an appetite suppressant, a mental and physical stimulant and mood enhancer, and a remedy for dozens of serious diseases including cancer, multiple sclerosis, obesity, and psychotic and neurotic disorders. All the claims are fraudulent. The alga tastes awful and sometimes contains natural toxins that cause digestive symptoms and fatigue, and may be carcinogenic.

Rating: -1.5

### **St. John’s Wort**

This herb appears to be beneficial in some cases of depression. If the claims are true the drug has powerful effects on brain neurotransmitters and impulse patterns. The mechanism is unknown and the theories are contradictory. Possible interactions with other drugs and with nutrients as well as other hazards are poorly understood. Although it is probably safe and effective for careful use in selected

patients, most people taking it are guinea pigs in a vast experiment that is poorly conducted without proper controls or record keeping

Rating: +1

### **Superoxide Dismutase (SOD)**

The enzyme SOD occurs naturally in the body. It disarms free radicals and thereby reduces the wear-and-tear aging of most tissues. Naturally, it is put into pills and sold as a cure-all. However, like all proteins, it is destroyed in the digestive tract and does nothing for one's health.

Rating: -1

### **Therapeutic Touch (TT)**

In the 1980s health professionals were confronted with a flood of cases of AIDS, a new deadly and frightening disease. At first it was not clear how communicable it might be, so there was some reluctance to get too close to patients or to touch them. At the same time it was clear that simple human touch can be reassuring and relaxing. Nurses especially knew this, so they faced a dilemma. They solved it with so-called therapeutic touch, by which instead of stroking and massaging a patient's body one strokes and massages the patient's "aura." Pleased with their brilliant solution, they went on to expand its applications and claims.

Now, we are told, by holding their hands a few inches from the body TT practitioners can detect tumors and other pathologies as well as infuse healing energy that effects amazing cures. In reality they cannot tell a live human from a corpse with their aura readings, but this fad has spread like a plague through the health care system. In the future non-therapeutic non-touch will be remembered as one of the great delusions of our millennial madness. To the extent that health-care dollars and manpower are diverted to this nonsense and away from real healing, including real touching, it is especially harmful. However, it does not cause much direct harm, so I can't give it as low a score as I'd like to.

Rating: -1

### **Ultra-Low-Fat Diets**

A diet with lots of starch and fiber, moderate amounts of protein and very little fat (around 10 percent of calories) is promoted as a remedy for atherosclerosis and related diseases. It is increasingly used as an alternative to surgical and medical treatments, and appears to be effective in some highly motivated patients.

Compliance is difficult for many. It is potentially hazardous as a general preventive

measure in persons without genetic predisposition to obesity, hyperlipidemia and atherosclerosis, especially in infants, children and pregnant women.

Rating: +2

### **Urine Drinking**

Drinking one's own urine as a daily preventive is advocated most often by Ayurvedists, but it appears in various trendy types of alternative medicine. After all, it is natural, organic, holistic and Eastern.

The bizarre practice epitomizes the sheer lunacy of the New Age movement, but I'm not sure how hazardous it might be. It must increase the load on the kidneys which, after all, know what they are doing in excreting and retaining certain amounts of fluid, urea and electrolytes. Drinking your urine is overriding the wisdom of the kidneys and stressing them. If this delicacy is indulged in too often might it not accelerate aging and latent pathology of the kidneys by overworking them? It would seem so, but how significant might the effects be? I can't say, but my intuition tells me that something so delicious can't possibly be good for us.

Rating: -2

### **Vinegar**

Consuming lots of vinegar in foods and drinks is supposed to be a remedy for dozens of diseases and disorders including obesity, arthritis, hypertension, atherosclerosis and heart disease. The theory behind its use makes no sense and there is no evidence to support the claims. The very heavy consumption of vinegar by true believers is harmful to dental enamel.

Rating: -1.5

### **Yeast Allergy Diagnosis and Treatment**

Also known as chronic candida, yeast syndrome and several other similar names, this fad disease allegedly causes many of the symptoms that used to be blamed on hypoglycemia. Headaches, fatigue, frequent colds, anxiety, depression, and miscellaneous aches and pains are supposedly caused by pathological sensitivity to a yeast-like fungus normally present in and on the body. A wide variety of nutritional supplements, herbal drugs, restrictive diets and other nostrums are peddled as cures.

Rating: -2.

## Epilogue

Imagine a world in which:

- Almost all health related books in bookstores and libraries are filled with inaccuracies, deceit, lies, and fraudulent claims.
- The print and electronic mass media have a taboo against criticizing the “new medicine” paradigm and its components. Instead of investigating and reporting truthfully, they pander, titillate, sensationalize and lie. Profit is their sole motive and they profit most from lying. The primary function of so-called journalists is to promote the scam of those who buy advertising, and to amuse their audiences. Students of communications and journalism are taught these principles and practices. Scientists, rationalists and skeptics are shunned, censored, excluded and blackballed by the media.
- The public has been thoroughly indoctrinated by the health fraud industry and the media, and helps them to pressure legislators to exempt the industry from antifraud laws and to institutionalize its frauds. The lies of the industry are declared the law of the land.
- Medical and nursing schools abandon scientific rigor and increasingly incorporate fantasies, delusions and frauds into their curricula. Dissent from the trend is considered politically incorrect and rationalists who criticize are not hired to teach or do research.
- Following the examples of chiropractic and acupuncture, dozens of politically savvy healing cults persuade the state and federal governments to legalize and institutionalize their superstitions, dogmas, pseudoscience and frauds. All citizens, whether or not they are clients of the cultists, pay for the cultists’ bills through taxes and insurance. They also pay to subsidize the education of those who will later deceive and defraud them.
- Even without the blessing of governments, thousands of other health cultists and scammers operate freely and without interference. Anyone can nail up a shingle and proceed to diagnose, treat, and prescribe. Health robbers are implicitly and explicitly exempt from antifraud laws.

- Anyone can put anything in a bottle and sell it as a “scientifically proven,” “clinically proven” remedy as long as they label it a nutritional supplement or homeopathic remedy.
- Fantasies, superstitions, dogmas and frauds gradually replace science in the secondary schools.

It does not take much effort to imagine such a society because, thanks to the corrupt mass media, we are about 80 percent there.

## Appendix

### **Journalists' Code of Ethics**

#### Preamble

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy.

The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues.

Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty.

Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility.

Members of the Society share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the Society's principles and standards of practice.

#### Seek Truth and Report it

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information. Journalists should:

Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error.

Deliberate distortion is never permissible.

Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.

Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.

Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity.

Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information.

Keep promises.

Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent.

Do not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.

Never distort the content of news photos or videos.

Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible.

Label montages and photo illustrations.

Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events.

If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it as such.

Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public.

Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story.

Never plagiarize.

Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.

Examine your own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.

Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.

Support the open exchange of views, even views that seem repugnant.

Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.

Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting.

Analysis and commentary should be labeled and should not misrepresent fact or context.

Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.

Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

### Minimize Harm

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect. Journalists should:

Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage.

Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.

Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.

Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort.

Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.

Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention.

Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.

Show good taste.

Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.

Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.

Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.

Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

### Act Independently

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know. Journalists should:

Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.

Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.

Refuse gifts, favor, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.

Disclose unavoidable conflicts.

Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.

Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.

Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

### Be Accountable

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers, and each other. Journalists should:

Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.

Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.

Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.

Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.

Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

### **Associated Press Managing Editors (APME) Code of Ethics**

These principles are a model against which news and editorial staff members can measure their performances. They have been formulated in the belief that newspapers and the people who produce them should adhere to the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct.

The public's right to know about matters of importance is paramount. The newspaper has a special responsibility as surrogate of its readers to be a vigilant watchdog of their legitimate public interests.

No statement of principles can prescribe decisions governing every situation. Common sense and good judgment are required in applying ethical principles to newspaper realities.

As new technologies evolve, these principles can help guide editors to ensure the credibility of the news and information they provide. Individual newspapers are encouraged to augment these APME guidelines more specifically to their own situations.

### Responsibility

The good newspaper is fair, accurate, honest, responsible, independent and decent. Truth is its guiding principle.

It avoids practices that would conflict with the ability to report and present news in a fair, accurate and unbiased manner.

The newspaper should serve as a constructive critic of all segments of society. It should reasonably reflect, in staffing and coverage, its diverse constituencies. It should vigorously expose wrongdoing, duplicity or misuse of power, public or private. Editorially, it should advocate needed reform and innovation in the public interest. News sources should be disclosed unless there is a clear reason not to do so. When it is necessary to protect the confidentiality of a source, the reason should be explained.

The newspaper should uphold the right of free speech and freedom of the press and should respect the individual's right to privacy. The newspaper should fight vigorously for public access to news of government through open meetings and records.

### Accuracy

The newspaper should guard against inaccuracies, carelessness, bias or distortion through emphasis, omission or technological manipulation.

It should acknowledge substantive errors and correct them promptly and prominently.

### Integrity

The newspaper should strive for impartial treatment of issues and dispassionate handling of controversial subjects. It should provide a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism, especially when such comment is opposed to its editorial positions. Editorials and expressions of personal opinion by reporters and editors should be clearly labeled. Advertising should be differentiated from news.

The newspaper should report the news without regard for its own interests, mindful of the need to disclose potential conflicts. It should not give favored news treatment to advertisers or special-interest groups.

It should report matters regarding itself or its personnel with the same vigor and candor as it would other institutions or individuals. Concern for community, business or personal interests should not cause the newspaper to distort or misrepresent the facts.

The newspaper should deal honestly with readers and newsmakers. It should keep its promises.

The newspaper should not plagiarize words or images.

### Independence

The newspaper and its staff should be free of obligations to news sources and newsmakers. Even the appearance of obligation or conflict of interest should be avoided.

Newspapers should accept nothing of value from news sources or others outside the profession. Gifts and free or reduced-rate travel, entertainment, products and lodging should not be accepted. Expenses in connection with news reporting should be paid by the newspaper. Special favors and special treatment for members of the press should be avoided.

Journalists are encouraged to be involved in their communities, to the extent that such activities do not create conflicts of interest.

Involvement in politics, demonstrations and social causes that would cause a conflict of interest, or the appearance of such conflict, should be avoided.

Work by staff members for the people or institutions they cover also should be avoided.

Financial investments by staff members or other outside business interests that could create the impression of a conflict of interest should be avoided.

Stories should not be written or edited primarily for the purpose of winning awards and prizes. Self-serving journalism contests and awards that reflect unfavorably on the newspaper or the profession should be avoided.

### **RTNDA Association of Electronic Journalists Code of Ethics**

On August 31, 1987, the RTNDA Board of Directors unanimously adopted the following code of ethics:

The responsibility of radio and television journalists is to gather and report information of importance and interest to the public accurately, honestly and impartially.

The members of the Radio-Television News Directors Association accept these standards and will:

1. Strive to present the source or nature of broadcast news material in a way that is balanced, accurate and fair.

A. They will evaluate information solely on its merits as news, rejecting sensationalism or misleading emphasis in any form.

B. They will guard against using audio or video material in a way that deceives the audience.

C. They will not mislead the public by presenting as spontaneous news any material which is staged or rehearsed.

D. They will identify people by race, creed, nationality or prior status only when it is relevant.

E. They will clearly label opinion and commentary.

F. They will promptly acknowledge and correct errors.

2. Strive to conduct themselves in a manner that protects them from conflicts of interest, real or perceived. They will decline gifts or favors which would influence or appear to influence their judgments.

3. Respect the dignity, privacy and well-being of people with whom they deal.

4. Recognize the need to protect confidential sources. They will promise confidentiality only with the intention of keeping that promise.

5. Respect everyone's right to a fair trial.

6. Broadcast the private transmission of other broadcasters only with permission.

7. Actively encourage observance of this Code by all journalists, whether members of the Radio-Television News Directors Association or not.

[Praise for a Previous Book by Kurt Butler](#)

*A Consumer's Guide to Alternative Medicine*

*A Close Look at Homeopathy, Acupuncture, Faith-Healing and Other Unconventional Treatments*

This is an encyclopedic exposé of nutrition scams, health hoaxes, and quackery in all its forms. Lays bare the myths and madness that defraud a naive public and siphon off billions of health-care dollars.

“Five stars!” – *Cooking Light*

“A great book” – *American Journal of Health Promotion*

“Excellent!” – *National Council against Health Fraud*

“Superb!” – *New England Journal of Medicine*

This book is still in print and is available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and at [PrometheusBooks.com](http://PrometheusBooks.com).

A Look Back by the Author

When Prometheus Books published this book in 1992 it was praised by responsible health experts, but trashed and even vandalized in bookstores by anti-science fanatics. Radio and television talk shows essentially black-balled me (and other whistleblowers and consumer advocates) while they gave billions of dollars in promotional publicity to a parade of liars and fraudsters.

An antidote to the trendy encyclopedias of “natural healing” from corporate publishers, this book is as relevant and current as ever, and one of the most comprehensive reviews of the subject. Most important, it has been largely vindicated by subsequent developments. Yet the courageous and far-sighted publisher is still sitting on unsold copies. Readers can reward their integrity by buying a copy, or buying several copies to donate to school libraries and to science and health teachers. (Royalties are insignificant. This little promo is in appreciation of, and hopefully to the benefit of, a great publisher.)

About the title: Some readers consider the title of this book misleading. My original proposed title was *An Encyclopedia of Quackery*. However, publishers have the last word on titles, and Prometheus feared mine would spark a flood of lawsuits that would cost the company millions of dollars in legal fees. So great was

the fear of lawsuits that the entire chapter blistering Scientology was scrapped because this organization has a habit of suing anyone who criticizes it.

It does not matter that truth is an absolute defense and that freedom of speech usually prevails in the end. It only matters that the cost of defending lawsuits can destroy a company long before it finally wins in court. First Amendment protection is technically still the law of the land in America, but in practice it has been greatly weakened. We are theoretically allowed to tell the truth about scams and scam artists, but doing so can be very expensive. The more successful and wealthier the scammer, the more easily he can intimidate, legally harass, and silence critics. Scientology is a good example.

In defense of the title, it is actually accurate. The book does, in fact, guide consumers and help them understand the truth about the most popular few dozen theories and methods of healing that they are considering and trying.

This is offensive to the postmodernists (new-agers), who are medical relativists. They blindly accept the claims of all the systems and practitioners that are marketed as alternative, holistic, natural, complementary, organic, mind-body, integrative or ancient Chinese.

These people think this and all books on the subject should assume the validity of all the systems and methods, accept all their claims, and focus on rating and explaining them for given conditions and situations, rather than entirely demolishing most of them.

Oops! Sorry about that, but I was guided by an honest search for truth and a scrupulous regard for facts – qualities that might come back into fashion someday.

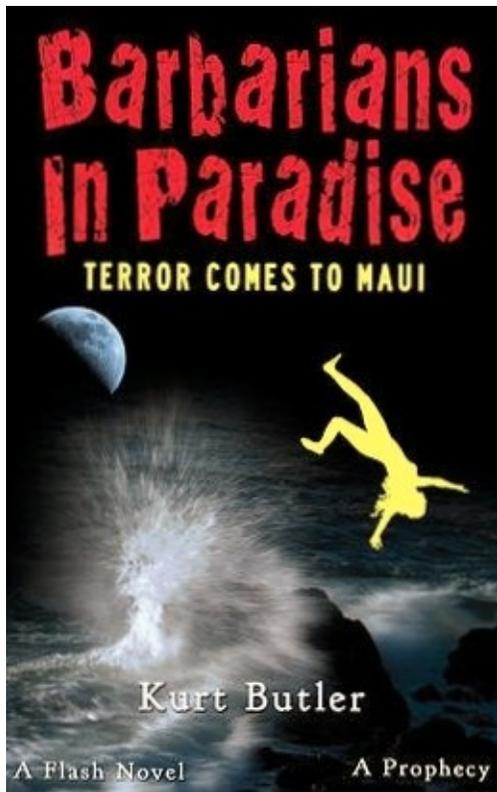
This book is still in print and is available at Amazon.com and at PrometheusBooks.com.

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For details about my arrests and persecution for my anti-quackery activities, as well as commentaries on health fraud and tyranny in Hawaii, see

KurtButlerBlogs.blogspot.com. And Twitter.com; search MauiLiberty.

**Another Book by Kurt Butler – see below**



*Barbarians in Paradise / Terror Comes to Maui* is available at Amazon.com and WingspanPress.com. ([Back to top](#))

A little more about me: I grew up in Hawaii (elementary school on Molokai, high school on Oahu) and I have lived full-time on Maui for 25 years. And for 25 years I have watched in dismay as the tyrannical tendencies on the island have steadily increased.

When I became a victim of unlawful arrests, police brutality, jail guard brutality, malicious prosecution, perjury by prosecution witnesses, and direct obstruction of justice by county attorneys (see my blogs), I was shocked. Most of this was related to my anti-health-fraud demonstrations and corruption was involved.

I spoke with others who have had similar experiences and I came to see just how rotten Maui County is. There is no real rule of law here, just a pretense. How much can people take? Will there be a breaking point? Assuming things keep going this way, what will Maui be like in 20 to 30 years? My novel takes a stab at answering this question. ([Back](#))

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