



The Newsletter of The North Texas Skeptics

Volume 16 Number 6

www.ntskeptics.org

June 2002

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Recent Trends in the Marketing of Homeopathy

By Daniel R. Barnett

You can't get away from it. Everywhere you go, at every supermarket or pharmacy, you'll probably find at least one homeopathic remedy on the shelf. I've even walked into a travel store and found a homeopathic remedy for airsickness. And you never know where the next box of homeopathic StressMints will pop up. Do these pills breed like rabbits or something? I should probably ask the same question of Oscillococcinum, Boiron's own homeopathic flu remedy; I'm seeing it in more and more drug stores as time goes by.

Today, however, I don't want to focus on StressMints or Oscillococcinum. I want to focus on some other homeopathic drugs and the way they're being marketed, as well as some of the strategies that are being discussed to sell homeopathy to the American public.

Did Someone Say the H-Word?

King Bio Pharmaceuticals, based in North Carolina, manufactures a line of home remedies known as SafeCare™. These medications can be found on the shelves of Eckerd drug stores in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. The box for SafeCare™ Cold & Flu Relief™ oral spray proclaims that this medicine is a "BREAK-THROUGH MEDICINE" that has "NO SIDE EFFECTS." Visiting the SafeCare Web site (<http://www.safe-care.com>), one will learn that SafeCare Cold & Flu Relief "can treat cold or flu conditions, and even more importantly stop a cold or flu in its early stages and better yet prevent the illness from ever occurring."

Before you rush out to buy this product, though, consider this. There is nothing on either the SafeCare Web site or on the front panel of the SafeCare Cold & Flu Relief box to indicate that this medication is actually a homeopathic medication.

Turn the box on its side, however, and you'll see a long list of ingredients, including *arsenicum album* and *pulsatilla*, along with a general list of homeopathic potencies and a note that the ingredients were prepared in keeping with the Homeopathic Pharmacopeia of the United States (HPUS).

When you pick up a box of Hyland's Calms Forté or Boiron's Oscillococcinum, both of which are relatively well-known homeopathic medications, there's always the word "HOMEOPATHIC" on the front of the box, albeit in a relatively small font. No such designation is to be found on the front panel of SafeCare Cold & Flu Relief. In fact, the word "HOMEOPATHIC" appears to be missing from the front panel of every SafeCare product as well as every page on the SafeCare Web site.

The ALLER-EZE line of allergy lozenges, marketed by The Roblin Group, can be found in many supermarkets and pharmacies.¹ If you watch the TV Interactive program *Healthy Solutions with Mariette Hartley*, you might have seen ALLER-EZE discussed during an episode of the program. ALLER-EZE is described during the segment as being made of "all-natural ingredients" and "free of the side effects and drowsiness" associated with conventional allergy medications. Dr. Jack Hinze of The Roblin Group also stated on *Healthy Solutions with Mariette Hartley* that ALLER-EZE "bypasses any difficulty we may have with the gastrointestinal system."

Check the ingredients in an ALLER-EZE lozenge, however, and you'll quickly learn why it's free of side effects and safe for the stomach – its "all-natural ingredients" have been subjected to homeopathic potentization. In short, you'd be lucky to get just a few molecules of the ingredients in the lozenge. As with the SafeCare line of products, though, not one box of ALLER-EZE that I've encountered so far has anything on the front panel identifying it as homeopathic. And that episode of *Healthy Solutions with Mariette Hartley*? The word "homeopathic" is not mentioned or displayed even once – not even by Dr. Hinze.

Once again, I must stress that the majority of homeopathic preparations on the market today are labelled as such on the front; the examples I just discussed are the exception rather than the rule. Still, why did King Bio Pharmaceuticals and The Roblin Group decide not to identify their products as homeopathic on the front of their packaging boxes – the side that faces the customer in the drug store who's looking for a medicine that can bring effective relief for what ails her? The answer may well be completely innocuous, but I'd still like to know...

Whispering Campaigns

While periodicals such as *New Age and Alternative Medicine* are tailored for a broad spectrum of people interested in alternative and holistic medicine, there are some magazines and journals that focus solely on homeopathy. *Homeopathy Today*, published by the National Center for Homeopathy (NCH), is one such publication, broad enough to serve the interests of everyone from degreed professionals to complete novices.

A recurring theme I've noticed in articles published in *Homeopathy Today* is an ongoing search to find more effective ways to sell homeopathic theory to the general public. For starters, one article in the December 2000 issue dealt with a speech by veteran homeopath Dana Ullman at the 2000 NCH Annual Conference in San Francisco. Jean Hoagland, who wrote the article, made the following observation:

Dana finds that to explain homeopathy by first speaking of the law of similars is fairly sure to turn people off – you lose their initial attention. He suggests that you instead begin by making the point that homeopaths believe that symptoms are defenses of the body to fight infection and/or adapt to stress. Disease is a fight for health. Any current book on pathology explains that inflammation is a defense of the organism to burn up and ultimately push out a foreign or pathogenic substance.²

According to the article, Ullman explained that the law of similars is corroborated by medical practices such as immunology and allergy treatments. "Even modern cancer treatments," Hoagland reported, "in using radiation, are using a method that both causes and cures cancer. Every chemotherapeutic drug is also a carcinogen." Ullman also admitted the difficulty in explaining the use of infinitesimal doses, and tried using concepts in resonance and radar waves to better explain this practice.

Soon afterwards, *Homeopathy Today* published another article on promoting homeopathy; this article was authored by

Judyth Reichtenberg-Ullman and Robert Ullman (no relation to Dana Ullman), authors of the homeopathic guidebooks *Ritalin-Free Kids* and *Rage-Free Kids*. Among the challenges they faced when lecturing about homeopathy was one dealing with the vocabulary used by homeopaths:

Some of our homeopathic terminology might send otherwise enthusiastic and open-minded people over the edge. Consider "succussion," "syphilitic and sycotic miasm," "the vital force," "suppression," and "cure."

Not that any of these words are untrue or inappropriate, just hard to swallow for some folks.³

Some of their recommendations included the following: Stay positive. Present the experiences of others with whom the audience can relate. End with a "short and sweet message about homeopathy" designed to stick in people's minds. They also offered this tidbit: "It's best to speak for a shorter time and leave people hungry for more rather than running the risk of putting them to sleep."

A company named 1-800-HOMEOPATHY also advertises frequently in *Homeopathy Today*, offering "Wise Whispers" dealing with how to get skeptical friends to try homeopathy. Here are a few excerpts taken from their ads:

- "A remedy called *Nerves, Sleep, Anxiety*, or even *Calms Forte* is much easier to explain than their Latin named ingredients – *Aconitum napellus, Ignatia amara, Lycopodium...*"
- "The holidays offer a wealth of opportunity. While decking the halls, have a little *Arnica* in your pocket in case she strains her shoulder or bruises her shin."
- "Another clue: never underestimate the value of repeating words like 'safe' and 'natural.' After that, the results will speak for themselves."

The Bottom Line and The Big Picture

If you're a skeptic, you might be desperate to come up for some fresh, rational air about now, but it's important to keep all of this information in perspective. Homeopathy has been with us for approximately 200 years; finding out why can help to better explain the modern-day push for greater recognition of homeopathy in America.

The American Institute of Homeopathy, the oldest national association of medical professionals in the United States, was established in 1844 to maintain the *Materia Medica* and bar incompetent physicians from practicing homeopathy.

Although homeopathy is often regarded as quackery, many American homeopaths in the 19th century were ardent anti-quackery activists, including many members of the AIH. Many of them railed against medical diploma mills⁴ and manufacturers of worthless elixirs and cure-alls. Royal Copeland, a Democratic US Senator from New York and homeopathic physician, built a strong reputation as an advocate for public health before securing legal protection and regulation for homeopathy in the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938.⁵

There were also schools and colleges designed to turn out MDs who were proficient in homeopathy; all such institutions in America have now been assimilated into "regular" medical universities or departments, adopted modern paradigms of clinical science, or shut down altogether. Without such colleges, homeopathic drug companies and professional organizations such as the AIH and the National Center for Homeopathy have had to take up the slack in terms of promoting homeopathic theory, conducting provings of new remedies, and so on.

The recent push to introduce modern American society to homeopathy appears to have had some success of late, but I have to wonder about some of the strategies that appear in the pages of *Homeopathy Today*. If such therapies are so self-evidently beneficial, why the sales pitch? Why attach the words "safe" and "natural" to sugar pills that, if potentized to 6C and beyond, probably don't have any of the active ingredient left? And why downplay the existence of the "vital force" if you believe it exists? But this is not the proper forum to discuss clinical trials of *Arnica* or the existence of the vital force. I just want you to see some of the ways that homeopathy is being promoted so that you can make your own judgments.

There was one homeopathic school, Atlantic Medical College in Baltimore, Maryland, that deserves mention at this point. When Abraham Flexner released his famous report for the Carnegie Foundation in 1910, he discussed the appalling conditions at Atlantic Medical: filthy conditions and equipment, imperfect physiological apparatus, a lecture

room with only "half a skeleton," and graduates who almost always failed at other medical schools or before the state board before making their way to Atlantic Medical. Although organized as a homeopathic school in 1891, Flexner noted that "the school has lately omitted the word 'homeopathic' from its title so as to gather in students dropped from other Baltimore schools."⁶

This revelation did not come as a complete surprise to me, but I still found it an interesting parallel to the labeling for SafeCare and ALLER-EZE product lines, both of which are homeopathic but fail to indicate such on the front labels. Such a practice may indeed be legal for all I know, but is it completely honest? Is it ethical? After all, King Bio Pharmaceuticals pulls in annual revenues approaching \$2 million for its products, including the SafeCare line – not bad for a company of 15 employees (at last count). Surely the folks at King Bio Pharmaceuticals don't think that putting the word "HOMEOPATHIC" on the front label of SafeCare Cold & Flu Relief will hurt their profit margins?

I continue to affirm serious problems with the claims made by firms such as Boiron, Standard Homeopathic Company, and Boericke & Tafel concerning their homeopathic medications. Such companies, however, have always been open and honest about the fact that they are homeopaths and that the pharmaceuticals they produce are manufactured according to homeopathic principles. The labeling practices of King Bio Pharmaceuticals and The Roblin Group are probably completely innocent and without any intent to defraud or deceive anyone who purchases their products. I'll give them that much. But let me leave you with this final thought: I will continue to hold Boiron, Boericke & Tafel, and Standard Homeopathic Company in much greater regard than I will any company that manufactures homeopathic remedies and then downplays the homeopathic nature of such drugs as part of a deliberate marketing strategy aimed towards an unwitting and uninformed public.

References

1 ALLER-EZE should not be confused with Aller-eze Plus, a (non-homeopathic) product of Novartis Consumer Health used for treating hay fever and other allergic conditions associated with nasal or sinus congestion.

2 Hoagland, Jean. "Explaining Homeopathy to Beginners and Skeptics." *Homeopathy Today* 2000;20(11):4-6.

3 Reichenberg-Ullman, Judyth; Ullman, Robert. "'Succussion'? 'Suppression'? How to speak to audiences about homeopathy." *Homeopathy Today* 2001;21(1):28-29.

4 The bogus diploma business. *Homœopathic Times* 1880;8(6):135.

5 Junod SW. Alternative Drugs: Homeopathy, Royal Copeland, and Federal Drug Regulation. *Pharmacy In History* 2000;42(1-2):13-35.

6 Flexner, Abraham. *Medical Education in the United States and Canada*. [Alias *The Flexner Report*.] 1910; The Carnegie Foundation; New York, NY:160.

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What's new

By Robert Park

[Robert Park publishes the What's New column at <http://www.aps.org/WN/>. Following are some clippings of interest.]

EMF: California prepares to resurrect the power line scare.

It's been more than 20 years since it was first claimed that power lines induce cancer. In 1995 the APS Council stated that such conjectures "have not been scientifically substantiated" (<http://www.aps.org/statements/95.2.html>). A year later, the National Academy of Sciences concluded the same thing (WN 1 Nov 96). In 1997, a National Cancer Institute

epidemiological study found no detectable EMF/cancer link (WN 4 Jul 97). Not a single lawsuit based on health effects of EMF has ever succeeded. Yet, California's Department of Health Services, inexplicably turned to three obscure scientists in the Department to "review" EMF studies. Without any new evidence, the three "are inclined to believe that EMFs can cause some degree of increased risk of childhood leukemia, adult brain cancer, Lou Gehrig's disease and miscarriage." Their review has not yet been released to the public. When it is, it will start this whole thing up again.

Evolution: Ohio members of congress join the creationists.

Reps. John Boehner (R-OH) and Steve Chabot (R-OH) jumped into the Ohio School Board debate on the side of Intelligent Design. They quote the Santorum Amendment, which passed overwhelmingly in the Senate (WN 15 Jun 01), but failed in the House. So it is in some sort of purgatory. The driving force behind the School Board action is Jonathan Wells, a theologian who went for a second PhD in biology because, "my prayers convinced me that I should devote my life to destroying Darwinism."

Misconduct? Bell Labs appoints a panel to investigate.

Rumors of serious misconduct charges leveled at the world's most successful laboratory (eleven Bell Labs researchers have shared in six Nobel prizes) suddenly burst forth on the pages of the *New York Times*. Lucent Technologies had responded to the accusations by appointing an independent panel of high-level scientists to investigate. We can recall no similar action by a major research lab. It reflects the importance Lucent attaches to the almost mythic reputation of Bell Labs, as well as the significance of the work, which included a single molecule electronic switch.

"Lifters": Alien technologists seek media exposure.

WN got a call this week from a network television reporter asking about "lifter" technology. Since NASA's Podkletnov gravity shield flopped (WN 12 Oct 01), the only anti-gravity claim around is the "lifter." Developers refused to deny rumors that the idea came from wreckage taken from the Roswell UFO crash. Could this be? According to the official Air Force report, the wreckage consisted of balsa wood sticks, metal foil, plastic tape and neoprene. So we went to web site of American Antigravity, which lists materials needed to construct a lifter. Same stuff!

Depressed? Maybe you should try an M&M.

According to a story in the *Washington Post* this week, a new analysis found that in the majority of trials conducted by drug companies, sugar pills did as well, or better, than antidepressants such as Prozac, Paxil and Zoloft. This is not to say the antidepressants didn't work, they did, but so did placebos. In fact, brain imaging showed the placebos affected the same areas of the brain as the prescription antidepressants. This may be telling us that if the problem is in your head, the cure is probably in the same place.

Alternative medicine: The Clinton commission's catch-22.

Created by Bill Clinton two years ago, the White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy has delivered a massive final report (WN 8 Mar 02), but there's a catch. What the Commissioners want is respect: they want to be licensed by the state and reimbursed by health-insurance plans; they want to see CAM courses at prestigious medical schools and programs to educate the public. In short, they want CAM to be treated just like real medicine. Good plan! Under its new director, Stephen Straus, the NIH Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine has already begun doing just what the Commissioners call for: applying the same standards to CAM that are routinely required of medical research. In 1998, the *New England Journal of Medicine* pointed out the catch-22: "There cannot be two kinds of medicine, conventional and alternative. There is only medicine that has been adequately tested and medicine that has not, medicine that works and medicine that may or may not work." In other words, if some CAM treatment survived rigorous testing, it would no longer be CAM, it would simply be medicine. So, is CAM making the transition? Uh, no. The most popular CAM therapies survived for centuries simply because they were never subjected to randomized, double-blind trials. It is certainly possible that important medical advances will emerge from the gaggle of CAM therapies, but so far, under rigorous testing, not one has been demonstrated to be efficacious, while several herbal supplements appear to be dangerous. "That's some catch, that Catch-22," Yossarian observed. 'It's the best there is,' Doc Daneeka agreed."

Alternative publishing: Communicating science by full-page ad.

Scientists going through the March 17 Sunday *New York Times* were startled to find a paper titled "The Collapse of the Big Bang and the Gaseous Sun," by Pierre-Marie Robitaille, published as a full page ad. A professor in Radiology at Ohio State, Robitaille had built the first 8 Tesla MRI. But this paper/ad was outside his field, cost a bundle (about \$125

thousand) and didn't have a clear target audience the public couldn't read it, but neither was it in the mathematical language of physics. On the other hand, Robitaille didn't have to put up with peer review and he had full control over timing. The timing raised eyebrows. Ohio is in the midst of a heated debate over a move to put Intelligent Design on an equal footing with Darwinism in the classroom (WN 15 Feb 02). ID is the fallback position of the creationists, who hate the Big Bang as much as they hate Darwin. Their strategy has been to portray the Big Bang as a divisive issue, with a powerful science establishment seeking to suppress dissenting viewpoints. Robitaille, who did not return our calls, seems to cast himself in the role of a lonely defender of truth who must spend a year's salary to get his side of the story out.

Health problems: White House commission ends, problems begin.

In the waning months of his administration, while pardoning felons and bestowing various favors on supporters, Bill Clinton rewarded loyal Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), an ardent believer in superstitious medicine, with an executive order creating a 20-member White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy. It was to last two years and submit a report to the President on how to spread the benefits of magic medicine. James Gordon, a leading "mind-body" proponent, was picked to head the commission, and he proceeded to select a "balanced" collection of true believers in acupuncture, Reiki, homeopathy, herbs, native American cures, quack diets and "energy" medicine of every sort. There are no legitimate scientific researchers on the Commission. Gordon himself has an interesting background, having been an ardent follower of the late Bhagwan Shri Rajneesh, he of the 35 Rolls Royces. The Bhagwan was deported after it was learned that his followers had deliberately poisoned some 700 residents of Antelope, Oregon with salmonella to keep them from the polls in a local election. The Commission officially terminated yesterday, and delivered its report to the White House. The report, which will not be made public for at least a month, is expected to call for legislation that would require insurance providers to cover the witch doctor of your choice. Since the Commission was created under the Clinton administration, it is hoped that the Bush White House will name a panel of medical experts to review the report.

(Christy Fernandez contributed to this week's What's New.)

Bob Park can be reached via email at opa@aps.org

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Punctuated equilibrium: Stephen Jay Gould dies at 60.

In the never ending battle against those who turn to religious myths rather than science to explain why things are the way they are, science has lost one of its most eloquent and beloved champions. Years of intense pain from the cancer that finally claimed his life never dimmed his sense of humor or his fierce determination to tell the story of evolution with such clarity and logic that people could not help but understand. Evolution, Gould argued, is not a steady progression toward some goal, but abrupt spurts of adaptation to an environment reshuffled by cosmic accidents. This is not the age of man, he argued, nor was there an age of the dinosaur; it is, as it has always been, the age of bacteria.

—**Robert Park**

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Stephen Jay Gould

By John Blanton

Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, noted champion of science and scourge of creationists everywhere has died of cancer. He was 60. Gould died at his New York home on Monday, 20 May.

With Niles Eldredge, Gould developed the theory of punctuated equilibria to explain the frequency patterns seen in the

fossil record. The fossil record shows a plethora of similar fossils and only scant examples of the intermediate forms predicted by Darwinian evolution. Gould and Eldredge explained this by postulating that large populations remain stable for long periods of time and sow the paleontological record richly. Speciation occurs rapidly (read scant thousands of years) in small populations, and the transition period leaves few fossils.

The creationists have made much of the bickering over punctuated equilibria, claiming it demonstrates confusion in the ranks of main stream science, "Darwinism" they call it. They can have their day now, but Gould will be remembered long after they are gone.

Books by Stephen Jay Gould:

[*I Have Landed: The End of a Beginning in Natural History*](#) (2002)

[*The Structure of Evolutionary Theory*](#) (2002)

[*Crossing Over: Where Art and Science Meet*](#) (2000)

[*The Lying Stones of Marrakesh: Penultimate Reflections in History*](#) (2000)

[*Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*](#) (1999)

[*Leonardo's Mountain of Clams and the Diet of Worms: Essays on Natural History*](#) (1998)

La Vie Est Belle: Les Surprises De L'evolution (1998)

Millenium: Histoire Naturelle Et Artificielle De L'an 2000 (1998)

L'eventail Du Vivant: Le Mythe Du Progres (1997)

[*Questioning the Millennium: A Rationalist's Guide to a Precisely Arbitrary Countdown*](#) (1997)

[*Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin*](#) (1996)

[*Dinosaur in a Haystack: Reflections in Natural History*](#) (1995)

Un Herisson Dans La Tempete: Essai Sur Des Livres Et Des Idees (1994)

[*Eight Little Piggies: Reflections in Natural History*](#) (1993)

[*The Book of Life*](#) (1993)

[*Bully for Brontosaurus: Reflections in Natural History*](#) (1991)

The Individual in Darwin's World: Second Edinburgh Medal Address (1990)

[*Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History*](#) (1989)

[*Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Ecological Time*](#) (1987)

[*An Urchin in the Storm: Essays About Books and Ideas*](#) (1987)

[*The Flamingo's Smile: Reflections in Natural History*](#) (1985)

[*Hen's Teeth and Horse's Toes*](#) (1983)

[*The Mismeasure of Man*](#) (1981)

[The Panda's Thumb: More Reflections in Natural History](#) (1980)

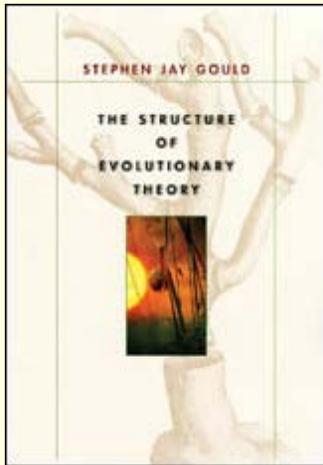
[The Evolution of Gryphaea](#) (1980)

[Ever Since Darwin: Reflections in Natural History](#) (1979)

[Ontogeny and Phylogeny](#) (1977)

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The Structure of Evolutionary Theory



Stephen Jay Gould

The world's most revered and eloquent interpreter of evolutionary ideas offers here a work of explanatory force unprecedented in our time—a landmark publication, both for its historical sweep and for its scientific vision.

With characteristic attention to detail, Stephen Jay Gould first describes the content and discusses the history and origins of the three core commitments of classical Darwinism: that natural selection works on organisms, not genes or species; that it is almost exclusively the mechanism of adaptive evolutionary change; and that these changes are incremental, not drastic.

Next, he examines the three critiques that currently challenge this classic Darwinian edifice: that selection operates on multiple levels, from the gene to the group; that evolution proceeds by a variety of mechanisms, not just natural selection; and that causes operating at broader scales, including catastrophes, have figured prominently in the course of evolution.

Then, in a stunning tour de force that will likely stimulate discussion and debate for decades, Gould proposes his own system for integrating these classical commitments and contemporary critiques into a new structure of evolutionary thought.

In 2001 the Library of Congress named Stephen Jay Gould one of America's eighty-three Living Legends—people who embody the "quintessentially American ideal of individual creativity, conviction, dedication, and exuberance." Each of these qualities finds full expression in this peerless work, the likes of which the scientific world has not seen—and may not see again—for well over a century.

Harvard University Press

<http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog/GOUSTR.html>

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By Prasad Golla and John Blanton

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