

Tip-Offs to Rip-Offs

Product No. 1: Pure emu oil

FDA determined that a pure emu oil product marketed to treat or cure a wide range of diseases was an unapproved drug. Its marketer had never submitted to FDA data to support the product's safe and effective use.

One Product Does It All

"... extremely beneficial in the treatment of rheumatism, arthritis ... infections ... prostate problems, ulcers ... cancer, heart trouble, hardening of the arteries, diabetes and more. ... " "completely eliminating the gangrene ... " "..." antibiotic, pain reliever"

Be suspicious of products that claim to cure a wide range of unrelated diseases—particularly serious diseases, such as cancer and diabetes. No product can treat every disease and condition, and for many serious diseases, there are no cures, only therapies to help manage them.

Cancer, AIDS, diabetes, and other serious diseases are big draws because people with these diseases are often desperate for a cure and willing to try just about anything.



Personal Testimonials

"Alzheimer's Disease!!! My husband has Alzheimer. On September 2, 1998 he began eating 1 teaspoon full of ... Pure Emu Oil each day. ... Now (in just 22 days) he mowed the grass, cleaned out the garage, weeded the flower beds, and we take our morning walk again. It hasn't helped his memory much yet, but he is more like himself again!!!"

Personal testimonies can tip you off to health fraud because they are difficult to prove. Often, says Reynaldo Rodriguez, a compliance officer and health fraud coordinator for FDA's Dallas district office, testimonials are personal case histories that have been passed on from person to person. Or, the testimony can be completely made up.

"This is the weakest form of scientific validity," Rodriguez says. "It's just compounded hearsay."

Some patients' favorable experiences with a fraudulent product may be due more to a remission in their disease or from earlier or concurrent use of approved medical treatments, rather than use of the fraudulent product itself.

Quick Fixes

"...eliminates skin cancer in days! ..."

Be wary of talk that suggests a product can bring quick relief or provide a quick cure, especially if the disease or condition is serious. Even with proven treatments, few diseases can be treated quickly. Note also that the words "in days" can really refer to any length of time. Fraud promoters like to use ambiguous language like this to make it easier to finagle their way out of any legal action that may result.