

"Quack! Tales of Medical Fraud"

Bob McCoy, 2000, 237 pages, Santa Monica Press, \$19.95

Review by Norman M. Goldfarb

"Quack! Tales of Medical Fraud" describes numerous devices and a few medications that medical quacks have used to prey on a public beguiled by the scientific advances of the industrial age. The book includes advertisements and photographs of many of the devices. To test your opinion of the gullibility of the America public, identify which of the following products actually existed:

- The Pulsocon, a device resembling a hand eggbeater, causes a vibratode to vibrate against the skin to increase circulation, loosen joints, and eliminate chronic pain.
- The Natural Eye Normalizer covers the eyes. Turning a handle massages the eyelids to relax the eyes and eliminate all vision problems.
- The Acu-Stop 2000 is a one-inch rubber device inserted into the right ear and massaged to alleviate feelings of hunger.
- Mont Kar Slimming Soap is used to rub away fat from the body.
- The Filteray Pad uses heat to treat hair loss, tuberculosis and tumors.
- The Crosley Xervac is a metal and rubber cap that grows hair by applying a vacuum to the scalp.
- Dr. Scott's Electric Hairbrush (without any source of electric power) treats headaches, hair-loss and diseases of the scalp.
- The Wilshire I-ON-A-CO (short for "I own a company"), a coil of insulated wire with an electric plug, is placed around the waist to magnetize iron in the blood, increasing its catalytic power to produce oxygen for the treatment of pain, insomnia or any other ailment whatsoever.
- Perkins Metallic Tractors consist of two pointed metal rods about three inches long, one iron and one brass, used as levers to draw toxic electricity from the body in the treatment of headache, rheumatism, deformities, etc.
- The Oscilloclast detects abnormal electron vibrations in diseased tissue and neutralizes them by retransmitting them back into the tissue to cure any disease.
- The Spectro-Chrome Therapeutic System uses green light to kill germs and build muscle tissue; yellow light to improve digestion and build nerves, yellow light to build bones, etc.
- The Coetherator modifies the vibration rate of ether in the atmosphere to treat cancer, blindness, arthritis, etc. Diagnoses are performed by moistening a slip of paper with saliva and slipping it into a slot in the top of the device's box. Alternatively, a photograph or handwriting sample can be used.
- The Color-Therm generates ozone to treat sprains, sinusitis, osteoarthritis, etc.
- Anti-Hemic Serum uses a potentiated 1:1000 dilution of the patient's own blood to cure alcoholism, dislike of one's spouse, and other ailments.
- The Solar Energizer therapeutic necklace, consisting of small wires embedded in an acrylic pendant, reduces tension, improves sleep, and alleviates pain.

- The Orgone Energy Accumulator, a large wooden box lined with sheet iron, is endorsed by the American College of Orgonomy. The patient sits inside the box, soaking up Orgone that falls from outer space (it is responsible for the sky's blue color), for treatment of cancer, psychological and other serious diseases.
- The Tricho Machine uses X-rays to remove unwanted facial and body hair.
- The Radioendocrinator uses pads charged with radium to ionize the endocrine system, increasing hormone production for the treatment of wrinkles, faulty memory, aches and pains, and other symptoms. It is unknown whether the device meets the Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry standard of a minimum of 2,000 millicuries per day.

The book is available in bookstores. Many of these devices are displayed in the Museum of Questionable Medical Devices (<http://www.museumofquackery.com/>) in St. Paul, Minnesota.

All of the treatments above were real products that enjoyed significant success in the market. At least one is still on the market today, along with countless others.

Reviewer

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