Drinking Water Scams

By
Southern Region Drinking Water Program Team

Adapted by
Kitt Farrell-Poe, AZ Extension WQ Specialist
Southwest States & Pacific Islands Coordinator
Objective

To make you more aware of the various types of scams associated with drinking water so that you can better recognize a scam or potential scam and know how to inform the public on how to deal with it.
What is a Drinking Water Scam?
Who is Susceptible to Scams?
History of Water-Related Scams
Many Scams Now Internet-Based
Examples of Past Water Scams

- Medical use of hydrotherapy
- Drinking radon or radium water
Fig. 53. HEPATIC DOUCHE (p. 310).
From Hot-Springs Therapy to Radium and Radon Water
For that Healthy Glow Drink
Radiation
Radon or Radium Water Devices
Radium Water from Pills

Radon Water from Liquid Concentrate
First Bottled Water Scam
Modern Day Drinking Water Scams

- Bottled water scams
- Health quackery scams
- Water treatment scams
- Water testing scams
- Water supply scams
Bottled Water Industry and Associated Scams

- All bottled water is not a scam
- Fraudulent vendor claims are scams
- Deception by sales persons are scams
- Special formulations are often scams
The Growing Bottled Water Industry

What Americans Are Drinking in 2002

Average Daily Consumption (8-oz servings)

- filtered or non-filtered tap water: 3.6
- coffee: 1.8
- bottled water: 1.7
- soft drinks (caffeine): 1.3
- milk: 1.2
- juice: 1.1
- tea: 0.9
- soft drinks (no caffeine): 0.6
- alcohol: 0.5
- sport: 0.2

Infographic by Renée Gordon
Bottled Water—the Good

- It is convenient and portable
- It is a good diet drink
- Healthier than many drinks containing sugar, caffeine and other additives
- Fits special niches (some are scams)
Bottled Water—the Bad

- It is very expensive in comparison to tap water
- It is not necessarily better than most tap water
- It is not necessarily safer than most tap water
- Some niche uses are scams
- It is associated with many health quackery scams
- It is associated with push for global privatization
Bottled Water and Health Quackery

- Bottled water is tied to many health quackery scams
  - Structure-altered or clustered water
  - Special oxygenated forms of water
  - Specialized mineral waters
  - Alkaline, ionic, or ionized water
  - Special energized forms of water
    - Treated with magnetism
    - Treated with some form of light
    - Treated with sound waves
    - Treated with electricity in some way
    - Treated with a special catalyst
    - Naturally occurring (some remote area)
Bottled Water Health Quackery

Scams

Oxygenated water

nonsense
More on Oxygenated Water Scams

Special oxygenated and clustered water found in nature

Super-oxygenated water – just a super scam
Need a Mineral Supplement, Order it in Your Bottled Water

Special mineral water for any element you desire
Other Bottled Water Scams

Water for special niches
(some are scams)
Other Bottled Water Scams

More health quackery nonsense — catalyst altered water
Where Bottled Water is Going

Driving interest in global privatization and international vending sales
Two Categories of Water Treatment Scams

1. Those convincing consumers to purchase treatment devices that do not work
2. Those convincing consumers to purchase treatment devices they do not need

There are scams associated with remedying both health and nuisance problems.
Water Treatment and Health Quackery Scams

- Devices that produce oxygenated, super-oxygenated, or antioxidant water
- Devices that produce special structure-altered or special clustered water
- Devices that produce alkaline or ionic forms of water
- Devices that produce water with some special form of energy or other magical properties
Oxy-Plus Water Treatment Devices
Bottled Water or Treatment Device Health Quackery Scams

Cluster Quackery

Untreated Water Cluster

Reduced Water Cluster Through Electrolysis

$H_2O_{36-corn}$ structure-altered water nostrums and nonsense
Health Quackery Treatment Scams

Devices for producing water with micro-clusters
Ionic Devices/Alkaline Water

“IONIZED” and alkaline water: snake oil on tap.
Ionizer for the Faucet
Health Quackery Treatment Scams

- The Bio-Alkalizer for around $1500
Health Quackery Treatment Scams

There are several opinions as to just what bio-water is. The main thing is that it is a scam.
More Water Treatment Nonsense

The magic of magnetism

Catalyst altered water
More Pseudoscience Health
Quackery

- **Blue water revitalizer**
- **(Grander effect)**
- The silver water kit
Specially Energized Water

HTN's ENERGIZED ELECTRON™ Concentrated Water

The PX ENERGY MUG and the LIFE FORCE or BOVIS SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Drinking and Bottled Water is Between 2000 - 5000 Bovis</th>
<th>The PX Home System Brings All Water in Your Home to 7,000 - 30,000 Bovis.</th>
<th>The PX Energy Mug Brings Drains to 18,000 - 40,000 Bovis Depending on Original Liquid.</th>
<th>Life Force Enhanced Water for Use by Health Practitioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Point for Human Life</td>
<td>Above 10,000, toxins begin reversing spin, allowing them to be more easily eliminated without harm to the body.</td>
<td>Energy-Balancing Water with Life Force Restoration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Health-Related Water Treatment Scams

Scare Tactics:
The hazards of chlorination and fluoridation
Anti-Fluoridation Movement
Nuisance-Related Water Treatment Scams

- Often associated with water testing scams
- Treatment needs are often misrepresented on the Internet
- Unscrupulous sales reps often rely on a consumer’s ignorance of water treatment
- A sales rep may even utilize Consumer Confidence Reports to aid in selling treatment devices
- Installed treatment systems can sometimes cause problems
- Very expensive treatment systems may come with an expensive maintenance agreement or no maintenance agreement at all
Three Types of Water Testing Scams

- On-site demonstration tricks
- Misinterpretation of lab test results
- Fake lab test results
Magnetic Water Conditioners for Treating Scale and Hard Water

Electro-Clear Gold
Reducing Cluster Size to Prevent Scaling
All New Techniques are Not Scams
Expect to Hear More About Privatization in the Future
Why Drinking Water Scams Work

- Because survival is more important to us than truth, logic, and reason
- Because we are prone to be superstitious and use irrational thinking
- Because many people are scientifically illiterate and cannot tell the difference between science and pseudoscience
- Because science education does not equilibrate to logical and critical thinking
Basic Characteristics of Drinking Water Scams

- Like most scams, they sound too good to be true
- They are not based on clear proven scientific principles
- They have no peer-reviewed reputable support literature
- They have testimonials from crackpots who promote pseudoscience
- They have fake testimonials from satisfied customers
- There is pressure to purchase or invest immediately
Where to Report Drinking Water Scams

- Any type of scam
  - Report to local sheriff
  - Report to state attorney general office
- False health and product labeling
  - Report to U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- Fraudulent mail
  - Report to U.S. Postal Service
- Fraudulent marketing
  - Report to U.S. Federal Trade Commission
Reporting Scams Through Internet

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
  http://www.fda.gov/medwatch
- U.S. Postal Service
  http://www.usps.com/postalinspectors/fraud/MailFraudComplaint.htm
- U.S. Federal Trade Commission
  http://www.consumer.gov/
For More Information on Drinking Water Scams and Other Scams

- Local Sources
  - Sheriff’s office, district attorney’s office, or consumer protection offices
  - Public water system representatives
  - County Cooperative Extension Offices
For More Information on Drinking Water Scams and Other Scams

- **State Sources**
  - Consumer protection unit of state Attorney General’s office
  - State primacy agency that enforces the Safe Drinking Water Act
For More Information on Drinking Water Scams and Other Scams

- Federal Sources
  - Federal Citizen Information Center (FCIC)
    http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov
  - Bureau of Consumer Protection of the U.S. Federal Trade Commission
    http://www.consumer.gov
  - Office of Groundwater and Drinking Water, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
    http://www.epa.gov/safewater
For More Information on Drinking Water Scams

- Over 50 Scam Links on Alabama Water Quality Information Website

- Reliable Internet Information on Fraud
  - Consumer Fraud Watch Network
    [http://www.consumersgroup.com/crimewatch](http://www.consumersgroup.com/crimewatch)
  - Net Scams Online Protection
    [http://www.netscams.com/scams.jsp](http://www.netscams.com/scams.jsp)
  - National Fraud Information Center
  - Legal Information on Scams and Fraud
    [http://www.cobrands.public.findlaw.com](http://www.cobrands.public.findlaw.com)