

30 January 2011

Advertising Standards Authority
Mid City Place
71 High Holborn
LONDON
WC1V 6QT

Dear Sir or Madam

I wish to complain about the attached leaflet.

Unfortunately, my complaint is more than the 5,000 characters allowed by your web form, so I am submitting it as an attachment to the web form.

The leaflet is titled:

Homeopathic Travel Prophylaxis

A prophylaxis is a treatment given to prevent a disease. I believe this title will lead readers to believe that homeopathic products act as prophylactics. Since there is no robust evidence that homeopathic products are effective for any disease or disease prevention, I believe this is misleading.

The leaflet states:

HOMEOPATHIC PROPHYLAXIS

Conventional holiday vaccination involves injecting a foreign protein into the blood. Homoeopathic prevention is more subtle and relies on an oral dose of the same material in a highly diluted and potentised form.

I believe this will lead readers to believe that homeopathic products act as prophylactics, are safer and less invasive than 'Conventional holiday vaccination'. Since there is no robust evidence that homeopathic products are effective for any disease or disease prevention, I believe this is misleading.

I believe that the characterisation of conventional vaccinations is scaremongering and that it abuses the trust of members of the public and exploits their lack of experience or knowledge about health and is irresponsible.

The leaflet states:

We offer homeopathic alternatives to conventional travel immunisations, depending on which areas you are travelling to.

I believe this will lead readers to believe that homeopathic products are as effective as conventional immunisations. Since there is no robust evidence that homeopathic products are effective for any disease or disease prevention, I believe this is misleading and I doubt the advertiser could substantiate this claim.

The leaflet states:

Examples of diseases travellers often encounter are: Typhoid, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Polio, Yellow Fever, Meningitis, Japanese Encephalitis, Tick-Bourne [sic] Encephalitis, Dengue Fever and Malaria.

I believe a reader will understand this to mean that homeopathic products are effective treatments that prevent these diseases. I doubt the advertiser could substantiate those claims.

The leaflet states:

Since these remedies have not been tested in clinical trials we are unable to make claims for the effectiveness of this method of disease prevention. Instead we rely on the anecdotal evidence of those who have chosen to use them successfully throughout the world.

Although the advertiser states he is not making claims, I believe the leaflet makes both explicit and implicit claims about the efficacy of homeopathic products for the diseases mentioned or for their prevention. This 'disclaimer' is therefore misleading.

I believe a reader will understand the second sentence to mean that some good evidence does, indeed, exist. This may also be compounded if the reader does not understand the meaning of the word 'anecdotal' and/or that anecdotal evidence is not robust scientific evidence.

I believe a reader may be misled into thinking that, because the homeopathic products have been used successfully throughout the world, these products must be effective. I doubt the advertiser could substantiate that claim that the products have been used successfully.

The leaflet states:

SUGGESTED DOSE

One tablet to be sucked or chewed three times a day on one day per week only, starting one week before departure and continuing for period of exposure. If in contact with active cases increase to one tablet daily for up to one week.

If preventatives are required for longer periods, e.g. more than one month, we suggest you reduce the dosage intervals to every fortnight, but if in contact or increased risk of exposure, revert to a weekly dosage.

I believe this will further lead the reader into thinking that homeopathic products are effective in treating the diseases listed or for preventing them. I doubt the advertiser could substantiate those claims.

I believe the terminology used (dose, tablet, exposure, active cases) and the prescription-like language will lead the reader into thinking that homeopathic products are equivalent to conventional medicines and simply an 'alternative' to them. I believe this is misleading.

The leaflet states:

Take Chelidonium 6X and Ceanothus 6X to maintain liver and spleen health and improve natural immunity when travelling

I doubt the advertiser could substantiate the claims that these products can 'maintain liver and spleen health' and that they can 'improve natural immunity'.

The leaflet states:

MALARIA

In the case of prevention against malaria continue treatment for four weeks upon return. For additional protection against malaria, take Chininum sulph 6c daily for 6 days each week, in addition to the once weekly malaria prophylaxis regime.

I believe the reader will understand from this that homeopathic products are an effective treatment for the prevention of malaria and that homeopathic product mentioned can provide 'additional protection against malaria'. I doubt the advertiser could substantiate these claims.

The leaflet states:

A good quality Vitamin B1 (plus B complex), starting one month before travel, may be a good preventative, as Vitamin B1 changes the blood acidity and makes you less appealing. Also, eating raw garlic is believed to help.

Ledum 30c taken 3 times each week may help prevent bites. If you are especially prone to being bitten, you may also take Caladium 6c and Staphysagria 12c in addition.

I doubt the advertiser could substantiate these claims.

The leaflet states:

We also stock:

ANTI-BITE TINCTURE

A combination of; Plantago, Urtica, Rumex, Ledum and Feverfew mother tinctures.

For prevention, add 10 drops of the tincture to one cupful of water and apply the mixture to all areas of exposed skin, using some cotton wool soaked in the lotion.

If they still get you, apply one drop to the bite as soon as possible, repeating as necessary.

I doubt the advertiser could substantiate these homeopathic products can prevent mosquito bites or that in any ameliorate them.

The leaflet states:

Take Apis 30c if the bites become hot and inflamed. Histamine 200X taken twice daily can help reduce an allergic reaction to bites.

I believe the reference to 'Histamine' will be associated by readers with the medical product of the same name and lead them into thinking that the homeopathic product is very similar, despite the fact it is extremely unlikely there is even a single molecule of histamine in the homeopathic product. I believe this will therefore mislead a reader into thinking the homeopathic product has similar efficacy to histamine. I doubt the advertiser could substantiate this claim.

The leaflet states:

AINSWORTHS TRAVEL KIT

An indispensable aid for your holiday. 10 important remedies in a pocket leather wallet, at a special price of £33.00

(value of separate items and wallet over £66.00)

I believe this will mislead readers into thinking that these homeopathic products are effective and useful for different and possibly serious medical conditions that could be encountered whilst on holiday. I doubt the advertiser could substantiate the claims that these homeopathic products are effective for any condition.

Overall, considering the language and tone of the leaflet, I believe it may delay or dissuade people, particularly the gullible or vulnerable, with serious medical conditions from seeking proper and possibly urgently needed medical advice and treatment.

Also, a reader may be persuaded by this leaflet to take homeopathic products before travelling to areas where malaria is prevalent in the belief they are protected. They also do not give essential advice on bite avoidance precautions that should be taken in areas where malaria is prevalent. This may lead to the reader to take risks and become exposed to situations where

contracting any of the diseases listed is more likely. I believe this is a very dangerous and life-threatening practice and that this leaflet is therefore irresponsible.

Yours

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Alan Henness
