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What Is Your IQ About Quackery?

True or false?

1. ___ It is easy to spot quackery.
2. ___ Quacks suffer severe penalties when convicted in court.
3. ___ The public strongly opposes quackery.
4. ___ Quackery does little real harm other than taking money from gullible people.
5. ___ Compared to times past, we have little quackery today.
6. ___ Quackery always involves fraud.
7. ___ Real medical doctors never engage in quackery.
8. ___ A quack’s patient never gets well.
9. ___ All quackery is illegal.
10. ___ Whether or not someone is a quack is purely a matter of personal opinion.

Turn the page for the correct answers.
ALL of the statements are FALSE!

1. It is easy to spot quackery. Although this is a common misconception, one can easily spot only Hollywood versions of quackery. Quackery today wears the cloak of science and of legitimate business enterprise. If it were not so difficult to detect, it would not be such a problem and it would not be necessary to write this book.

2. Quacks suffer severe penalties when convicted in court. Not so! The average fine for a quackery conviction over a twenty-year period in California was $200. Conviction for quackery costs less than it does for a legitimate physician to buy malpractice insurance.

3. The public strongly opposes quackery. Actually the public is extremely apathetic about the whole thing. Criminologists have found that quackery convictions carry about the same social stigma as receiving a traffic ticket.

4. Quackery does little real harm other than taking money from gullible people. Quackery kills far more people than we will ever know. One California source estimates that it produces more deaths than all other forms of violent crime.

5. Compared to times past, we have little quackery today. While the nineteenth century earned the title of the “golden age of quackery,” the fact is that there is even more now. What makes it worse today is that many illnesses can be cured if properly treated, while in the past even honest medical doctors had little to offer their sick or dying patients. For that reason, we find more needless death due to quackery nowadays.

6. Quackery always involves fraud. Since “fraud” implies an intent to deceive, this is untrue. Many quacks are sincerely dedicated to their nostrums. A number have killed themselves and their loved ones with their favorite remedies.

7. Real medical doctors never engage in quackery. Unfortunately the lure of dollars, notoriety, or egomania causes some physicians to turn to the practice. Anyone can engage in it.

8. A quack’s patient never gets well. Many diseases—even serious ones sometimes—go away by themselves. Some psychosomatic illnesses respond to any meaningful treatment. When a patient does improve, the quack will take credit and use the case as a testimonial to lure more people to his remedy.

9. All quackery is illegal. Sad to say, it is not. More than twenty
States have legalized the cancer remedy Laetrile in the past few years. One legislator actually proclaimed that his State should legalize it to bring sick people into his State as tourists! Also, several States license “naturopathic physicians,” and all States give legal recognition to unscientific chiropractors. Although intended to regulate their activities, at the same time it serves to give questionable methods the appearance of validity.

10. Whether or not someone is a quack is purely a matter of personal opinion. The term quackery is derived from the word quacksalver—that is, quack means “to boast,” “brag,” “promote,” “call attention to oneself” (quacks quack!)—salve means to “soothe,” “alleviate,” or “cure.” Literally, then, quackery is the promotion of questionable health products and services (questionable-ness pertaining to safety and/or effectiveness). People who fit such a description are quacks whether they are sincere or fraudulent, medical doctors or impostors, operating within the law or not.
As we have seen, most people think that quacks are obviously dishonest. Some quacks fit such a description, but most do not. The quack may be sincere, whether from self-delusion, insanity, or simply ignorance. A medicine or treatment may have value for conditions other than the ones for which the quack employs them.

For instance, chelation therapy (a process that transfuses EDTA through the bloodstream) helps detoxify victims of lead poisoning. Quacks use it to attempt to reverse coronary heart disease.

Quacks may have spurious credentials that they themselves created or obtained from a diploma mill. On the other hand, others have legitimate degrees (medical, dental, nursing, physical therapy, osteopathic, Ph.D., and others), but have abandoned the rigorous scientific disciplines of their training and turned to cultism, pseudoscience, and/or fraud. Any combination of the foregoing is possible. Add the personality and psychological skill of a quack and you have enormous potential for confusion and deception.
Quackery Is Costly

The amount of money Americans spend each year on quackery staggers the mind. According to consumer health expert Dr. Stephen Barrett, it annually exceeds $10 billion.

Quackery has a way of making its products and services seem like a bargain, which is not difficult because of the high cost of regular medical care. However, in the long run its price can run extremely high. Once the quack has the patient’s confidence and trust, he can keep his victim coming back again and again.

A Pennsylvania woman underwent ten years of treatment for what her chiropractor called “tilted spine.” Then he told her she had arthritis of the spine and needed $10,000 of additional treatments, including stretching, a special diet, and “blood cleansing” on special machines. Six months after treatment began, her chiropractor informed her he was moving to California. Afraid she might become a cripple without further treatments, she sought medical advice. Doctors determined that her arthritis was not nearly as bad as she had been led to believe and that the chiropractic treatments had been of no real value. In addition, the physician found that she had osteoporosis (a skeletal weakening), which actually made the chiropractic treatments dangerous for her. After she filed criminal charges of theft by deception, the chiropractor agreed to return her money if she would drop the suit.

The woman in the case above was lucky. She recovered a substantial portion of the money she had needlessly spent. Also she didn’t suffer the possible spinal fracture chiropractic treatment could have inflicted upon her weakened spine. Others have not been so fortunate.

Quacks demonstrate great creativity in their financial schemes. One self-styled healer accepts the victim’s money as a loan. “If,” he says, “I fail to cure your cancer, I’ll return your money with interest.” Once he has the money, he can think of many ways to stall the victim while cancer eliminates him. Others work for “freewill” donations.
Of course, the expectation that the patient will donate assures compliance, and an accomplice usually suggests the amount.

P. T. Barnum said, “‘Never try to beat a man at his own game.’” That’s good advice. Trying to match wits with quacks will only make you poor.
Quackery Can Be Deadly

"The highwayman used to say, 'Your money or your life,'” Dr. W. W. Bauer once stated. "The quack says, 'Your money and your life.'” Dr. Bauer is right. Quackery kills. It can either keep a person from proper medical treatment (as it often does in cases involving cancer); substitute a worthless remedy for an effective one, as it may do with diabetes; or actually poison the patient or upset the body’s metabolism, as it has with improperly employed arthritis medications. The path of quackery lies littered with the bodies of children killed by well-meaning parents who listened to quackery’s siren call; dieters who tried programs recommended by physicians in popular books; food faddists who adhered doggedly to bizarre diets; or victims who practiced herbalism on themselves guided by books and pamphlets obtained from self-proclaimed “nature doctors.” The list could go on.

In matters involving health and disease what a person believes and in whom he places trust and confidence are life-and-death issues. The hapless victims of quackery have one thing in common: they bought the quackery’s lie that they could not trust the scientific community including organizations such as the American Medical Association, the Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Public Health Service, the American Cancer Society, and so forth. Quacks dislike such organizations because they have responsibility for educating the public about proper health practices and medical care.

In addition, such agencies help patrol the health marketplace against quackery. Just as bank robbers hate the police, so do quacks hate those agencies that impede their activities. While it should be obvious, to some it is not. It amazes me how many people willingly believe that the health agencies are suspect and quacks are trustworthy. I do not mean to say that such organizations never err—obviously all human institutions are fallible—but choosing to place confidence in offbeat groups that promote unproved treatments in the name of “health freedom” can be a deadly choice.
The Medical Quack

A medical quack is difficult for most people to resist for three reasons. First, he often seems legitimate, usually having a license from the State to practice either medicine, osteopathy, chiropractic, or naturopathy. Second, he catches a person at his greatest vulnerability—when he faces the threat of illness or death. And third, because of his ability to win the confidence of his victims by dominating them with his superior knowledge and personality.

How to Spot Medical Quacks

1. *They may offer a “special” or “secret” formula or device that no one else has.* In the war against disease and death, medical scientists share their information freely. For instance, when medicine conquered polio, no one attempted to keep this discovery from the rest of the world.

2. *They promise or imply a quick or easy cure.* Quacks understand the impatience of human nature. They work to provide quick relief even if it means giving arthritics dangerous steroids that will later bring terrible side effects, using stimulants or painkilling substances that only mask the symptoms of a disease, or providing some form of physical therapy that provides temporary relief while the disease progresses unchecked.

3. *They often claim that other medical men or “the establishment” persecute them or fear their competition.* We all remember from history classes that during the prescientific era the church, society, and fellow colleagues would oppose the great men of science. However, their ideas eventually won out because science could document them by means of *demonstrated proof.* Quacks appeal to public sympathy by claiming to be on a par with the early pioneers. The difference is that today science demands *demonstrations of proof* that quacks cannot provide. Close examination of such charges of “establishment” persecution usually reveals that the claimant has failed to demonstrate that the treatment is either safe or effective. The
public has a right to protection from such unproved remedies. Sometimes quacks use the term “holistic” to cover their lack of scientific evidence.

4. They belittle recognized treatments. To foster trust in themselves, quacks must undermine confidence in conventional methods. They will refer to surgery as “cutting” or “butchering,” drug therapy as “poisoning,” or “toxic” radiation as “burning,” and so forth. Such terms can frighten already anxious patients away from orthodox treatment and into the hands of quackery.

5. They rely upon testimonials for proof of effectiveness. Testimonials can be quite impressive. After all, if someone believes an unconventional remedy cured his disease, it’s pretty difficult for another to disprove him. But such testimonies do not sway medical scientists, because they realize that most diseases are self-limiting. Sometimes symptoms go away even though the disease may still remain. Many times people suffer from psychosomatic ailments, which vanish when they interact with a healer. Also there exists what we call the placebo effect, a kind of conditioned response to treatment that results in improvement of the symptoms even of real disorders. Quacks can also deceive patients into believing they are seriously ill when they are not. When the quack tells them that he has cured them, they accept his word.

6. They discourage consultations with other doctors. Many serious diseases display no symptoms in the early stages. If a seemingly trustworthy “doctor” tells you that you are suffering from a “quiet killer,” how can you know he’s lying? Obviously a second opinion is essential. Any legitimate doctor welcomes a second opinion from an independent party. Quacks demand total faith in themselves.

7. They will quickly threaten critics with lawsuits. Critical peer review is an essential part of the scientific process. Those who claim to be able to treat the sick and dying should expect to meet strict demands for responsible behavior. Science requires that they provide acceptable evidence of proof. Quacks attempt to silence the criticism of experts through threats of lawsuits. Busy doctors, scientists, and educators hesitate to become embroiled in litigation even when they are in the right.
Fountain of Youth
Quackery

Ponce de Léon was not the first to search for the legendary fountain of youth and he wasn’t the last. The ability to reclaim lost youth and vigor is also a quest of legitimate scientists. If ever found, its discovery will be front-page news. Quackery doesn’t wait for such a marvelous achievement—it happily claims to have discovered the miracle already. Currently touted versions of rejuvenation quackery are:

**Gerovital (GH3).** Actually procaine (more commonly known as novocaine), a local anesthetic, this promise of youth comes from Romania, a country not noted for longevity or a level of health nearly as good as we have in America. However, faraway places offer their own kind of mystique for quackery.

**Cellular Therapy.** For rich people only, it requires the slaughter of a pregnant ewe for her unborn fetus, a pampered stay in an Alpine chalet, and many other amenities. Although many world-famous figures have undergone the treatment, its proponents have failed to provide documentation of effectiveness.

**Royal Jelly.** There seems to be no end to the nonsense people will believe about bees. Someone has touted everything from bee pollen, honey, propolis, and honeycomb to royal jelly (the hormonal substance fed to larvae to make them into queen bees) as containing health-enhancing qualities. But we have no evidence that bee hormones have any effect upon humans. Even if they did, the amount needed would be impossible to supply due to the difference in size between humans and bees.
Food Quackery

All of us have to eat. If quacks can convince people that special foods will enhance health, beauty, or performance, the profits can be enormous. You can recognize food quackery by its claims, which usually rest upon distortions and half-truths. Here are some of the common ones:

CLAIM. Soil depletion has caused modern foods to lose their nutritional value, and although modern produce looks nice cosmetically, it is nutritionally deficient.

Fact. Without proper soil nutrients, plants simply cannot grow. When soil depletion occurs, crop yield goes down, but the plant still contains the nutrients genetically programmed into that particular plant. While some variability does exist within genetic strains, it is not significant.

CLAIM. Modern food processing robs our food of much of its nutritional value.

Fact. Mankind has always had to process foods in order to keep them from harvest to harvest. All food preservation techniques cause some loss of nutritional value, but old-fashioned methods like sun-drying, pickling, smoking, storage in cellars, salting, et cetera made nutritional deficiency diseases such as scurvy very common. Modern processing methods preserve more nutrients than any of the old-fashioned methods. Deficiency occurs only rarely today, not because of food processing, but because of alcoholism, poverty, food faddism, or digestive disorders.

CLAIM. Food additives are dangerous to our health.

Fact. Food additives retard the growth of molds, many of which are dangerous. Some additives prevent fats from becoming rancid, which affects flavor and can produce cancer. Other additives preserve nutritional value, such as reducing the loss of vitamin C through oxidation (seen in the discoloring of canned and dried fruits). Color additives enhance appearance, which we now know helps to get people (especially children) to eat the meals placed before them. Still
others maintain texture so foods will be palatable. People have always wanted food to be safe and healthful, and to look and taste good as well. Remember the poem “In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue”? Why? To find India, the source of spices, the popular food additives of his day. Because science has so widely studied food additives, we now know far more about them and their effects than we do about the food we put them in. The evidence indicates that the majority of food additives benefit health rather than harm it by protecting us from the dangers of spoilage.

CLAIM. Pesticides are poisoning our food supply.

Fact. Without pesticides, insects would gobble up so much of our food crops that modern life as we know it would disappear as we struggled to get enough to eat. Pesticides are closely monitored for their effect upon the food supply. All foods, even those claimed to be “organically grown,” contain pesticide residues. But such residues are so infinitesimal that they pose no threat to human health.

CLAIM. Certain foods, such as wheat germ, lecithin, cider vinegar, spirulina, honey, aloe vera juice, yogurt, alfalfa sprouts, and mung beans, et cetera, have special values.

Fact. While many of the items mentioned above are nutritious and we might include them in a normal diet, none of them have the special values generally attributed to them by health-food promoters. The digestion process breaks food down to simple sugars, amino acids (basic proteins), and fatty acids. From them the body takes what it needs for energy, growth, repair, and other functions.

CLAIM. Special diets can cure diseases.

Fact. If a person had scurvy, he should use Vitamin-C-containing foods such as oranges, cabbage, or tomatoes. However, the faddists aren’t referring to such examples. Instead they teach that cherries can relieve arthritis, apricot pits can cure cancer, and so on. The use of food as medicine instead of seeking proper medical care kills a large number of well-meaning people every year.

CLAIM. Pasteurized milk is unhealthful.

Fact. Milk is one of the most nutritious foods available. Unfortunately, that applies to micro-organisms as well as people. Raw milk harbors many infectious disease agents. From 1971 to 1974, for example, sixteen Californians died from salmonella poisoning from raw milk. Statements that claim pasteurization greatly reduces the
food value of milk rest upon outdated data from old-fashioned methods of pasteurization. In reality, pasteurized milk differs little in food value from raw milk, but it is much safer.

**Harm Done by Food Quackery**

Food quackery causes economic hardship on many people who become frightened into using expensive so-called health foods, organic foods, and the like. Some people, such as carrot-juice faddists, who may turn yellow from carotenemia, poison their bodies with excessive nutrients. Others develop nutritional deficiencies by limiting their food intake to what they regard as superfoods—brown rice, certain fruits, et cetera. A number have even died from refusing to give up their food faddism, a high price to pay for trusting in the food quacks.
The Weight-reducing Quack

In terms of dollars, weight-reducing schemes are the current champions of quackery. The American public spends billions on them every year. Some are deadly. Not long ago more than fifty people died following a program relying upon diet supplementation with predigested protein.

Fad weight-loss programs are difficult to deal with because nearly all of them are successful for a short time. Someone can always provide an enthusiastic testimonial about how well it worked for them. Unfortunately, the successes don’t last. When the failure occurs, the tendency is to blame yourself instead of the fad diet.

The reason why such programs all appear effective for a while is that dieting requires a strong psychological commitment. Fad diets help one maintain the state of mind of a dieter while he eats less. But they fail in the long run because they operate upon unrealistic eating habits that the person cannot maintain.

Following are some of the common claims associated with weight-reducing quackery:

CLAIM. You can eat all you want of certain foods and still lose weight.

Fact. This idea employs the principle of food boredom. Restricting variety drops the total caloric intake. People simply get tired of cottage cheese, pineapple, cabbage, watermelon, or even steak.

CLAIM. You can lose twenty to twenty-five pounds a week.

Fact. Rapid, early weight losses result from dehydration (water loss) and reductions in intestinal bulk. To remove a pound of real weight, the body must burn about 3,500 calories more than it takes in. Even under extreme conditions you will lose only about one-half pound a day. Neither dehydration nor extreme dieting is healthful.

CLAIM. Calories don’t count.

Fact. Sheer dishonesty. Such a claim attempts to catch the attention of desperate people who cannot control their appetites.
Calories are energy measurements that correspond to the most basic laws of nature. When water runs uphill, the sun rises in the west, and fire freezes, then calories may not count!

CLAIM. Certain foods or supplements burn up fat.

Fact. To date scientists have discovered no such substance even though many investigators have searched for it. If they find such a thing, it will be heralded in the headlines, not in a paid newspaper advertisement or a popular book.

CLAIM. You can loaf, think, bathe, or sleep fat away, or get rid of it in some other effortless way.

Fact. The only way any of the above could occur is if you stopped eating as well. Then it would take longer to rid yourself of the fat because weight loss is always a combination of reduced caloric intake and/or increased energy output (exercise).

CLAIM. Cellulite...

Fact. Whenever you see the word cellulite in a claim—WALK AWAY. It is the creation of health quackery. The rippled, lumpy-looking fat dubbed “cellulite” is normal fat for its unlucky owner. The connective tissue beneath the skin of many women (men seldom have the problem) is such that the fat chambers are large and rounded. Naive figure saloon operators, misled by salespeople promoting all kinds of devices for removing so-called cellulite, have perpetuated the silly notions about cellulite being waste products, unburned food, and the like. No special device or food will have an effect upon rippled fat beyond that of normal weight loss.

CLAIM. The kind of food one eats causes overweight. (One is advised not to eat carbohydrates, proteins, or fats—each of which has been the target of a weight reduction quack at some time.)

Fact. Proper nutrition includes a variety of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. While weight-conscious people will want to avoid overeating foods that concentrate calories, restricting one’s diet to a “low carbohydrate” or some other extreme regimen is unwise. You cannot realistically maintain them and you may place your health in jeopardy.

CLAIM. Hormone injections (HCG) can redistribute “abnormal” fat from the waist, hips, and thighs, and help control the appetite.

Fact. No evidence has ever validated this claim, and other studies have found that HCG has no value in weight-loss programs. It appears
to be another gimmick to help reducers maintain their state of mind.

**Claim.** A staple or acupuncture needle in the ear can help suppress the appetite and aid weight loss.

**Fact.** Again, studies have found it to be untrue. It has the effect only of reminding one of his commitment to lose weight.

**Claim.** Spot-exercises enable a person to take weight off the hips.

**Fact.** Studies have repeatedly shown that spot-exercising per se does not work. Heredity determines where body fat will distribute itself. Exercise can aid in reducing total body fat, but it will come off according to genetics, not spot-exercising.

**Claim.** Body wrapping, sauna pants, and other such squeezing apparatus (often used with creams) will effectively remove body fat.

**Fact.** They are worthless gimmicks. Some people believe they have lost weight with such methods because they have temporarily lost inches according to before-and-after measurements. Such losses result from compression just like the crease left by a tight waistband or girdle. Such garments can be hazardous to people with diabetes, varicose veins, or other circulatory problems.

**Claim.** Diet pills are effective weight loss aids.

**Fact.** Anything based upon a “crutch” psychology will ultimately fail. While some pills serve as appetite suppressants, they don’t help a person learn new eating habits. In addition, their effectiveness wears off quickly as the body develops a rapid tolerance to them.
The Phony Express
(Quackery by Mail)

Despite the best efforts by postal inspectors, a great deal of quackery by mail still thrives. Two things aid such fraud: (1) public gullibility—people simply aren’t skeptical enough when they see claims made in print, and (2) public apathy—people generally take no action when they’ve been cheated through the mail. Either they figure it isn’t worth the hassle or that they failed to use the item properly.

Common Mail Order Rip-offs (and some uncommonly-known truths)

**Baldness Remedies.** Medical science knows of no substance or device that will restore hair lost to normal “male pattern baldness.” Ads showing before and after hair restoration may actually illustrate people who have recovered from various emotional or physical disorders.

**Bust Developers.** All bust developers are fakes. Only normal growth and development, general weight gain, or hormones such as those released during pregnancy can increase breast size. Exercise may develop the muscles of the chest underlying them, but the effect will be minimal.

**Wrinkle Removers.** Only plastic surgery can remove wrinkles for any appreciable period of time. Creams, lotions, and other gimmicks can do no more than temporarily tighten the skin.

**Reducing Gimmicks.** The most commonly advertised rip-offs by mail order are the weight-loss gimmicks. One example of the kind of sham that goes on is a product containing 40 cents’ worth of ordinary wheat bran that sold for $9.95 as a special weight-reducing substance. (See THE WEIGHT-REDUCING QUACK).

**Diploma Mills.** Quacks often use impressive-looking credentials obtained from numerous mail-order degree mills. Such degrees and certificates are worthless academically. They will not qualify anyone to perform any legitimate function, but only allow quacks to call themselves “doctor,” “researcher,” “consultant” or some other
impressive-sounding title. Several best-selling nutrition books have had authors with worthless mail-order Ph.D. degrees.

Some government agencies have been rather lax in protecting the public from diploma mills. For instance, the State of California permits a business to become "authorized" as a university if it has a curriculum, a faculty (it stipulates no criteria for quality), and $50,000 of net assets (which can be the home or office of the businessperson). Such "universities" do not have state accreditation, but several have made up for this by creating their own accreditation agency (in other words, an "accreditation mill") so they can advertise themselves as "accredited programs." They deceptively call their worthless diplomas by the standard academic nomenclatures of Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Many of them have been in the field of nutrition, so their recipients can claim to be qualified nutrition counselors when they peddle health foods, vitamin supplements, or herbs. Other phony credentials include Doctor of Naturopathy, Doctor of Homeopathy, Bachelor of Therapeutic Science diplomas, and certificates as "Cancer Researcher," "Reflexologist," "Iridologist," "Acupuncturist," "Nutrition Counselor," or qualified in "natural childbirth." The "faculties" of such diploma mills often consist of notorious quacks with criminal records in health fraud, physicians who have lost their licenses, or fringe practitioners.
Quacks also capitalize on the natural desire to be beautiful. Muscle-building regimens, figure enhancers, cosmetics, special reconstructive surgery, and health spa programs make up a whole category of frauds. Here are some warnings for the wary.

**Beware Of—**

**Protein Supplements.** Muscles consist largely of protein. However, whether or not a muscle enlarges does not depend upon whether it receives extra protein, but upon stimulation by high-resistance exercise.

**Mutilating Cosmetic Surgery.** Some of the saddest tragedies have involved botched cosmetic surgery that left people physically and emotionally scarred for life. Failed breast reconstructions resulting in amputation, “cellulite” removal that left legs misshapen, rebuilt noses that no longer function properly, and scarred faces on which the quack chemically burned the skin offer just a few examples.

**Cosmetics.** Most cosmetics are relatively harmless unless contaminated and used around eyes and other mucous membranes. Here you should watch out for your pocketbook. Cosmetics differ little in function or effectiveness. Only color, fragrance, and packaging separate most of them.

**Health Spas.** Spas offer a service and provide facilities for exercise and relaxation. They engage in quackery when they lead customers to believe that vibrators, sauna baths, massage, or sunlamps have an effect upon weight loss or fitness. Many sell expensive and unneeded vitamins and food supplements to unwary customers.
The Friendly Salesman Quack

One of the most common forms of quackery involves the sale of health products (vitamin pills, herbs, food supplements, cosmetics, et cetera) by door-to-door sales people. They may not be traditional doorbell ringers, but someone you work with, friends, or relatives. Usually they are well-meaning people, highly motivated to get ahead financially by carrying on a little business enterprise where they distribute a line of household products. Generally they work on a pyramid sales structure in which they attempt to sign up their customers as salesmen too. Such people are trying mainly to realize the great American dream of success and financial independence. However, ignorant about nutrition and health, they rely primarily upon their suppliers for the information they provide their customers. Filled with promotional hokum, they set out unknowingly to victimize their friends and neighbors with unneeded or harmful health products.

How to Spot Health Hucksters

1. The same organization that supplies their products has trained them on the job.
2. The claims of food faddists (i.e., soil depletion, food processing, et cetera, rob our food of important nutritional elements) appear in their promotion.
3. They credit their products with special or exceptional properties.
5. Generally they use case histories and testimonials to impress their customers.
6. Through emotionalism (joy and enthusiasm) they seek to elicit both hope and fear.
7. No matter what the need or desire expressed by the customer, they always have an answer for it.
Mental Health Quackery

Some of the most damaging forms of quackery involve the exploitation of the mind. Typical examples include fortune telling, palm reading, astrology, tarot card reading, biorhythm calculators, pendulum divining, and graphology (handwriting analysis). Such ancient magical systems encourage people to discard their rational judgment when making decisions. Instead, they come to rely upon chance and cleverly written explanations they can fit to almost any situation. Clients surrender their critical judgment and let the "reader" take charge of their destinies.

Legitimate psychological counselors undergo extensive training to prepare themselves to help people deal with their problems. They seek to aid individuals to learn to become independent, make good decisions, and accept responsibility for their actions. Fortune tellers and other pretenders, however, lead people to believe in fatalistic views of the world, in which outside forces control their lives (and are thus responsible for whatever happens). Their victims make choices based upon chance and develop a dependence upon purported seers, psychics, and other such gurus. Such practices do not encourage the development of good mental health. Some specific abuses by mental health quackery are:

**Making Character Judgments.** People have their trustworthiness, sexual adjustment, mental stability, and other extremely important factors judged by their handwriting, their astrological sign, or a swing of the pendulum. Many have denied others employment, broken engagements, and erected social barriers for no better reason than the outcome of such unproved methods. Practitioners of the occult arts do not hesitate to make life-altering decisions based upon such nonsense. No responsible counselor would ever take such a responsibility upon himself.

**Making Financial Decisions.** Whether or not to buy or sell are tough decisions. Professionals study economics, politics, and keep up with advances in science, technology, and many other fields to form
responsible conclusions. Here again the charlatan is ready to gamble the funds of others on the way numbers turn up or some other bit of superstition.

**Decisions Involving Health.** A whole realm of diagnosis and treatment called "radiesthesia" employs pendulums to locate diseases and prescribe treatments. The treatments may involve a pyramid-shaped device on the notion that its shape directs or controls some mystical or as yet undiscovered force. But scientists have studied pyramids both archeologically and to determine if any of the claims of special effects are valid. They are not. The only people who have benefited from "radiesthesia" are the writers and peddlers who traffic in such drivel.

**Reincarnation Psychotherapy.** A recurring bit of nonsense employed by mental health quacks involves sessions where people fantasize about a previous existence. Researchers have investigated many such claims (e.g., the search for Bridey Murphy) but have yet to find any that hold up to close scrutiny. We can consider such practices only as pseudoscience and their promotion pure quackery.

**Witchcraft.** One of the most psychologically damaging forms of mental health quackery is witchcraft. People can buy amulets, charms and talismans sold expressly for the purpose of controlling others. Of course, they don't really work, but rather, they have the effect of distorting the mind of the user. Instead of taking constructive actions or adjusting to life's changes, he finds himself trapped into his unrealistic fantasies. Rituals sold by the witch-peddlers include means of supposedly getting revenge on one's enemies. Rejecting the normal mind-healing processes, which permit us to forget unpleasantness, and the higher act of forgiveness that Christianity teaches, witchcraft urges people to nurture hate and act out retribution by sticking pins in dolls and other hostile practices.
Where to Turn for Help

If you think you’re the victim of health quackery, report your problem to the proper Government agency.

*If the product is made and sold within the State only:*
Local or State health department, attorney general, or consumer protection agency.

*Suspected cases of false advertising either in a publication, on radio or television:*

- Federal Trade Commission (FTC)
  6th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW.
  Washington, D.C. 20580

  OR your regional office

  Federal Communications Commission
  1919 M Street NW.
  Washington, D.C. 20554

- United States Postal Service (USPS)
  Chief Postal Inspector
  475 L’Enfant Plaza
  Washington, D.C. 20260

  OR check with your local postmaster.

*About a misrepresented medical device:*
Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
Bureau of Medical Devices
HFK-125
8757 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

*About products (foods, drugs, or cosmetics) sold in more than one state:*

* If the complaint involves radio or television, send copies of it to the station involved and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
State:

Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
Consumer Affairs Office
(your regional office)*

WHERE YOU CAN READ MORE IN ORDER TO STAY AHEAD OF QUACKERY

Books

The Health Robbers, by Stephen Barrett, M.D., foreword by Ann Landers:
George C. Stickley Publishers
210 West Washington Square
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106 Hardback only

Health Quackery, by the editors of Consumer Reports
Books:
Consumers Union
256 Washington Street
Mount Vernon, New York 10550 Paperback

Vitamins and "Health" Foods—The Great American Hustle, by Victor Herbert, M.D., J.D., and Stephen Barrett, M.D.:
George Stickley Publishers
210 West Washington Square
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106 Hardback

New Nuts Among the Berries, by Ronald Deutsch:
Bull Publishing Co.
P.O. Box 208
Palo Alto, California 94302 Paperback

Consumer Health: A Guide to Intelligent Decisions, by Cornacchia and Barrett:
C. V. Mosby Co.
11830 Westline Industrial Drive
St. Louis, Missouri 63141 Paperback

* Locate by phoning Directory Assistance or checking listings under United States Government, Health and Human Services Department.
Magazines

*Consumer Reports*
Consumers Union
256 Washington Street
Mount Vernon, New York 10550

*FDA Consumer*
United States Department of Health and Human Services
Public Health Service
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fisher’s Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20857

Pamphlets

They are available from a variety of sources on specific diseases:

The Arthritis Foundation
Public Education Dept.
3400 Peachtree Road NE.
Atlanta, Georgia 30326

American Diabetes Association
2 Park Ave.
New York, New York 10016

The American Cancer Society
777 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10017

American Council on Science and Health
47 Maple Street
Summit, New Jersey 07901
The word *quackery* makes most of us think of snake-oil peddlers removing a few dollars from the pockets of the extra gullible. But quackery is often subtle and sophisticated and milks millions of dollars from the general public. And it may destroy health or even cause death.

How do you spot quackery? Can you protect yourself from it? What do you do if you are victimized by it? The answers to such questions are vital to the health and economic well-being of every person.

William T. Jarvis, a professor of health education at the Loma Linda School of Allied Health Professions and chairman of the Department of Public Health Science, is a nationally recognized authority on the subject of quackery. He holds a doctorate in health education from the University of Oregon and has served on and chaired a number of committees investigating medical and related fraud.