Response to Dr Mercola

16 Sept 10

It was with much interest, disbelief, and disappointment that we read the article and watched the video recently published by Joseph Mercola M.D., who warned the public against alkaline, ionized water. We read with interest because of the torrent of e-mails we received from countless, upset people who felt betrayed by Dr. Mercola. We read with disbelief as Dr. Mercola offered numerous unsupported and poorly researched opinions, made many misstatements, and contradicted much of his own writing—past and present. We have noticed that Dr. Mercola’s articles have become, over time, increasingly negative and fearful. More and more, his articles seem to sacrifice true research in preference to making a sale or a point.

This “natural health guru,” who once sprinkled fresh life over a desert of failed drug-based health options, has appeared to sell out and become the very thing against which he railed.

Plain and simple, Dr. Mercola is a marketing machine… and a questionable one at that. A 2006 *BusinessWeek* editorial criticized Dr. Mercola's marketing practices as "relying on slick promotion, clever use of information, and scare tactics." [1] The Weston A. Price Foundation stated, "Mercola’s official pronouncement is a strange mixture of true statements and illogical sequelae, conflicting reasoning and unexplained omissions." [2]

Since the advent of his “brand,” Dr. Mercola has been one of the most outspoken voices against the establishment and questionable efficacy of the double-blind study. Yet now, because it suits him, Dr. Mercola has fallen on his own sword by contradicting the very credo upon which his sales machine was built.

Among his many put-downs on medical research, he recently (on May 22, 2010—only three and half months ago) wrote a particularly vehement attack.[3] In this article, he states, among other things, that “Science-based medicine is a ruse,” “Published studies are likely to be seriously flawed,” “Natural therapies are at a disadvantage in this flawed system,” and finally, “If an alternative treatment has not been published in a medical journal it does not mean that it is unsafe or ineffective.” Now he calls alkaline, ionized water “snake oil on tap” because, “Scientific justification for these water systems is absent.” Which way is it Doctor?

Further, Dr. Mercola sells products on his own website that lack scientific justification. What research does he provide for the efficiency and safety of his tanning bed; especially in light of a recent FDA report that states, “Tanning beds are now shown to cause skin cancer, skin burns, premature skin aging, and eye damage (both short and long-term).”[4] What double blind studies does he have in support of his extensive line of vitamins, minerals, herbal treatments, and plethora of other products? What research
does he have to support the “high amount of calcium” he recommends in his Multivitamin Plus, which he claims “supports the skeletal system”?

In the video, Dr. Mercola implores us each to don our “logic” and put “your natural thinking cap on.” Does he take us for fools? The video and article contain so many unsupported opinions, poor research, misstatements, and contradictions that it would take a voluminous tome to address them all! Let’s examine some facts, some of the fiction he proposes, and straighten out some of his egregious misstatements.

Fact, fiction, or slick marketing? Dr. Mercola plays BOTH sides of the marketing fence – specifically to suit his shifting needs. Dr. Mercola, in his article, praises the cancer research of Robert Gilles, who uses highly acidic compounds to attack cancer cells and concludes, “Scientists who are in the process of developing prototypes for potential new anticancer agents that selectively kill tumor cells by interfering with the regulation of intracellular pH, have found that alkaline treatments do NOT have the desired effect— **but strongly acidic treatments do.**” Thus, Dr. Mercola uses a very pro-acidic treatment as proof of the inefficiency and even danger of using a pro-alkaline approach.

*But wait!* In another internet article,[5] he praises an alternative method being practiced by Tulio Simoncini, a medical doctor from Italy. Dr. Simoncini injects tumors with **highly alkaline sodium bicarbonate to kill the cancer cells**. Dr. Mercola stated, “Unfortunately, Dr. Simoncini is yet another brilliant doctor who has been ousted from the medical community due to his revolutionary simple ideas of how to cure profit-making diseases.” See footnote[6] for some of Dr. Simoncini’s research.

**Fact:** Dr. Mercola tries to appear as if he has an absolute answer on alkaline water when all he really does is side with the establishment (when it is convenient for him) to make his point and sell his wares. The fact is that the jury is out on the cause of cancer and the effectiveness of treatments.

**Fact:** Dr. Mercola, in his article, states, “I can assure you that I would never use alkaline water as a regular source of water.” Yet, in a popular internet article[7] called *Early Death comes from Drinking Distilled Water*, Dr. Mercola states, “The ideal water for the human body should be alkaline and this requires the presence of minerals like calcium and magnesium.”

**Fiction:** Dr. Mercola states, “There are very, very few legitimate, scientific studies about the effects of alkaline water on human health.”

**Fact:** There are many university studies on various aspects and effects of alkaline, ionized water on human health. There are approximately 75 years of Russian research, 30 years of Japanese research, and 20 years of Korean research. All three governments have done extensive research. Please see footnote[8] for the list of Japanese research that has, to date, been translated into English. That the studies weren’t performed in the U.S. should give Dr. Mercola confidence; since, as he points
out himself, the drug companies control much of the medical research done in the U.S. The fact is that Dr. Mercola has done poor research on this subject.

**Fiction**: Dr. Mercola states, "And if you drink alkaline water all the time, you’re going to raise the alkalinity of your stomach, which will buffer your stomach’s acidity and impair your ability to digest food as low stomach acid is one of the most common causes of ulcers. This can open the door for parasites in your small intestine, and your protein digestion may suffer."

**Fact**: Ben Johnson M.D., D.O., N.M.D. states, “I have performed hundreds of gastroscopes. The stomach is normally empty. When you drink water without food the water moves through the stomach in a fairly rapid fashion into the small intestine where it is absorbed, not really affecting the mucous lining of the stomach nor the pH of that mucous. After years of research into the effects from drinking alkaline water, I am yet to see any causal relationship between alkaline water and parasite or digestion issues. In fact, there is a plethora of Asian research that shows the opposite.”

**Fiction**: Dr. Mercola incorrectly states, "If you really want to alkalinize your body, it would seem wise to encourage it with the highest quality water possible, which is obtained from vegetable juice."

**Fact**: Ben Johnson M.D., D.O., N.M.D. states, “I know Dr. Mercola sells some juicers, so I guess it is good for him. Let’s be clear—juice is food. Basic biochemistry shows that the digestive system processes juice and water differently. Juicing is a great way to get nutrients - not H2o. If you want hydration then you need to drink water. I recommend that it be slightly alkaline so that you get the magnesium and potassium ions which are so healthy.”

**Fiction**: Dr. Mercola states that ionizers are sold by making “astonishing health claims” and “unsubstantiated health claims,” including that they “cure cancer.”

**Fact**: To date, IonWays has never received any warning from the FDA for its marketing or that of its representatives and has never claimed that ionizers cure cancer.

**Fact**: Dr. Mercola has received *two warning letters* from the FDA for marketing nutritional products in a manner which violated the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. [9][10]

**Fiction**: Mercola states, “The fact that most water ionizers and alkalizers are being marketed by multi-level marketing (MLM) companies with less than stellar ethics.”
**Fact:** There are 100s of companies in the U.S. selling water ionizers and approximately ten importers. Only three companies sell through MLM. The “ethical” statement borders on libel, but rather than pursue this legally, I personally invite Dr. Mercola to call me directly and find out about how IonWays does business, our ethics (compliance policies), and our charitable giving.

**Fiction:** The “expert” in his video, Mr. Houston Tomasz, states that the ionizer industry “will not be around for very long.”

**Fact:** Ionized water has been consumed in Japan since the early 1970s without any known contraindications. It has been sold and consumed in the U.S. since approximately 1995. It is estimated that about one in every six households in Japan now use a water ionizer, and one household in eight in Korea.

**Fiction:** Mr. Tomasz states, “When you [MLM companies] are selling a product that 10 people get a commission on, it’s expensive.”

**Fact:** I have run the sales for both MLM and a traditional business selling the Emco Tech product line-up. I would make a personal invitation to Dr. Mercola and challenge him to a “transparent” accounting review - his company and our company with results to be published. If you research, you will see that IonWays sells its industry-leading model for approximately the same price as all the other leading models, dispelling this notion. It is clearly not marked up to the level of the Enagic™ SD501 at $4,000.

**Fiction:** Dr. Mercola states, “These consumers have merely fallen under the spell of a skilled [MLM] marketer who selectively misused pseudoscientific information, and twisted it around to scare them into buying their product.”

**Fact:** Dr. Mercola is doing a great disservice to the hundreds of thousands of network marketers that dedicate their lives to helping others help themselves. The fact is that Direct Sales is one of the fastest growing segments of the global economy – especially during a downturn. Our Associates represent IonWays and their loyalty and passion is supported by a Compliance Department that makes sure all marketing efforts are compliant. As in any business model, there are sales representatives who will, at times, act out-of-line. When they do, they are appropriately reprimanded.

Neither IonWays nor its Independent Associates misuse the existing science. I have personally presented the science behind our ionizers in front of hundreds of medical professionals of all types, and have never had anyone take issue with the statements I made. In the end, we are no more guilty than Dr. Mercola himself for using the available research and theories to support our beliefs.

Most importantly, IonWays does not “scare” its customers—unlike the fear-based tactics employed by some internet marketers. IonWays’ approach is to give out our product FOR FREE to allow the customer *to make up his own mind.* I invite the good doctor to come join one of our presentations and see for himself.
Fact: The “expert” in the video, Mr. Houston Tomasz, is a V.P. for Sun Water Systems, Inc. (http://www.aquasana.com), which is a major player in the water filtration products industry. Dr. Mercola did not offer any certifications or credentials held by Mr. Tomasz that would qualify him as an “expert.” Certainly not an unbiased one.

Fiction: Dr. Mercola states that, “Water ionizers are NOT filters.” Both he and Mr. Tomasz make similar statements in the video, including much discussion about lack or misuse of certifications.

Fact: The IonWays Biostone Plus is manufactured in the USA with NSF certified components. The nine-stage Biostone Plus incorporates catalytic carbon, KDF, and multiple sediment filters between stages to remove the suspended solids of one micron or greater. The IonWays Athena is a dual filter model offering you the ability to have 18 separate barriers to treatment. We offer many pretreatments. IonWays does not claim its electrical certifications relate to the water.

Fiction: Dr. Mercola incorrectly states, “I don’t think you are going to find naturally occurring alkaline water.”

Fact: Most of the U.S. municipal tap water supplies are alkaline due to the fact that they are hard water. Further, there are many sources of naturally occurring, higher pH/low ORP water. One such example here in the US is the water from Trinity Springs in Paradise, Idaho. It is well documented that Trinity Water exits the ground at pH 9.4 to 9.6 with a -150mv ORP. There are others...

Fact: Dr. Mercola lauds Dr. Masaru Emoto’s work on water crystals and states, “The healing water sources formed beautiful and complex crystalline geometries.”

Fact: IonWays Emco Tech technology has been photographed by Dr. Emoto and was shown to have a beautiful and complex crystalline geometry. See the footnote to refer to the photo and certification from the Hado Institute.

Fact: Dr. Mercola states, “In the near future, I [Dr. Mercola] will post a comprehensive review of water filters.” Dr. Mercola already sells a competing water filtering system.

These iterations of fact or fiction cover only a small portion of egregious statements. As off-base as the article was, we are even more surprised that Dr. Mercola allowed the video to be published. In the end, his expert makes statements in the video that actually support the cornerstone principles behind alkaline ionized water. Mr. Tomasz states, “I personally believe alkaline is better, I like a pH above 7,” and, “Alkaline water is optimal because by definition you cannot have free radicals in an alkaline environment” …yet they talk in the video and the article about ionizer salespeople confusing the customer!

So who is the real Dr. Mercola? You be the judge. In the May 2006 BusinessWeek editorial referenced above, columnist David Gumpert opined: “Mercola gives the lie to the notion that holistic practitioners tend to be so absorbed in treating patients that they
aren't effective businesspeople. While Mercola on his site seeks to identify with this image by distinguishing himself from ‘all the greed-motivated hype out there in health-care land,’ he is a master promoter, using every trick of traditional and Internet direct marketing to grow his business. He is selling health-care products and services, and is calling upon an unfortunate tradition made famous by the old-time, snake oil salesmen of the 1800s.”

It’s our bet that Dr. Mercola’s recently published article and video warning against alkaline, ionized water were nothing more than “slick promotion” as BusinessWeek pointed out. We believe his forthcoming review will undoubtedly and inevitably steer you toward a specific water product or products. Then, in conjunction with these two publications, Dr. Mercola will have positioned himself to come across as the “unbiased voice of reason” the “dispeller of pseudo-science” and the “provider of unbiased truth.” The reality will be that (just as he does with the other 100+ products he sells or otherwise endorses) he is pulling the strings to steer many trusting readers to products for which he will receive some form of compensation, either directly or behind the scenes. He gets it both ways.

I personally find Dr. Mercola’s approach sad and disheartening. We invite anyone who reads this article to talk with those who have personally consumed and benefitted from alkaline ionized water – many for upwards of 10 or 15 years. Better yet, we invite you to try it for yourself and see – for free. We ask that you let your body be the final judge. It is not by marketing that we will change the state of health in the U.S. It will be through a grass roots movement of people who empirically know alkaline, ionized water works. Regardless of what Dr. Joe Mercola says.

In good health,

Jay Hare
President
IonWays
"Our water changes everything"

References:

8. http://www.ionways.com/needs to be filled in once the page is up
9. FDA warning 1: Living Fuel Rx, Tropical Traditions Virgin Coconut Oil, and Chlorella issued to Mercola for promoting products on his website "for conditions that cause these products to be drugs," contrary to the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, Public Health Service of the FDA (February 16, 2005).
10. FDA warning 2: Warning Letter: Optimal Wellness Center CHI-7-06 21 Sept 2006. Issued a year later, sent following a personal investigation of facilities on April 24, 2006 by FDA authorities.
11. http://www.ionways.com/needs to be filled in once the page is up