

# oreilly @ internet medicine show

Medicine has always attracted the weirdest and wackiest hangers-on, and today they have migrated to their natural environment — the Internet. The World Wide Web is overflowing with wacky medical devices, services, therapies and healers. Indeed, it is such a mecca for the weird and not-so-wonderful that Dr. Stephen Barrett, a retired American psychiatrist and well-known medical consumer advocate, has taken his famous “Quack Watch” online ([www.quackwatch.com/](http://www.quackwatch.com/)).

He explains that “quackery” developed from the word quacksalver, which describes someone who boasts about his salves. Dictionaries define quack as “a pretender to medical skill; a charlatan” and “one who talks pretentiously without sound knowledge of the subject discussed.”

Whatever the definition, the Internet is Quack Central. And it seems that when people turn on their modems and “click” into the Web, they check their critical thinking at the door. Here is a small — make that a tiny, no, an infinitesimal — sample of what’s out there.

### *Personal Life Force Energy Discs*

[www.ozelink.com/natures\\_energies/discs.htm](http://www.ozelink.com/natures_energies/discs.htm)

Having trouble with all those nasty electromagnetic fields in the neighbourhood? The folks who operate this site have just the thing: their personal Ch’i energy discs. These amazing Life Force devices “cancel out the negative effects [of EM fields] on living systems by producing a gentle energy harmonized for the human energy field.” The sellers admit that their discs are not scientifically proven but “kinesiology tests have revealed their effectiveness in experiments where human subjects were placed in the presence of an electromagnetic field with and without the disc.” That’s enough evidence for me.

### *Therapeutic touch*

[www.therapeutic-touch.org/html/touch.html](http://www.therapeutic-touch.org/html/touch.html)

Who needs doctors, medicines or medical procedures? These folks have put perfect health at your fingertips — literally. According to this site, “therapeutic touch is an intentionally directed process of energy exchange during which the practitioner uses the hands as a focus to facilitate the healing process.” Unlike the Life Force Discs (see above) this is a “scientifically based practice.” This is

because the “human body, mind, emotions and intuition form a complex, dynamic energy field.” Disease happens when this field is out of balance, so the TT practitioner simply needs to massage it back into place. For some obscure reason, sceptics have kept the practice out of the medical curriculum.



### *Maharishi Ayur-Ved products*

[www.mapi.com/index.htm](http://www.mapi.com/index.htm)

At this site you can choose from a number of herbs, roots and programs that not only promise “a vibrant body, a peaceful mind, a heart filled with joy, and long life,” but also total enlightenment. “Once thought of as unattainable, enlightenment is now within your grasp. Maharishi Ayur-Ved brings you to the place where Total Health resides within you, creating the ultimate healing experience.”

### *Museum of Questionable Medical Devices*

[www.mtn.org/quack/index.htm](http://www.mtn.org/quack/index.htm)

Learn all about the MacGregor Rejuvenator, the Psychograph and the Chiropractic Toftness Radiation Detector. This is a collection of the weirdest and wackiest medical devices ever invented — and used. This museum exists to educate consumers about medical-device fraud and to promote healthy scepticism. Located in Minneapolis, the museum’s artifacts are available for viewing online.

### *Preventing heart problems with Kirlian photography and gem therapy*

[www.bicserve.com/htm/jmshah.htm](http://www.bicserve.com/htm/jmshah.htm)

As this site points out, all living organisms have 2 bodies. “One is visible physical body [sic] and other is invisible energy body [sic].” This second body, called the aura, is where disease first enters. Using Kirlian photography, the practitioner detects disease onset 6 to 8 months before symptoms appear. Even better, these folks can use rubies to cure heart disease. “Ruby is a hot Gem. It opens the heart. It has to be energised, and its negativity has to be removed. It is then put on energy blocks of left hand second finger and of left palm and fixed with an adhesive tape for several hours for 6 to 7 days.” Mine’s in the mail.

*Advanced longevity medicine to retard the aging process*

[www.chelationtherapy.com/](http://www.chelationtherapy.com/)

Dr. Herb Pardell (DO, FAAOI) of the Natural Health Institute in Aventura, Fla., offers chelation therapy as a “non-toxic treatment for hardening of the arteries.” QuackWatch Director Barrett says chelation therapy is a series of intravenous infusions involving various substances. Proponents claim it is effective against atherosclerosis and many other serious health problems, but there is no scientific evidence to support this.

*Sports event conception blocker*

[www.babycenter.com/conflicts/](http://www.babycenter.com/conflicts/)

The nice folks at The Baby Center have a tool to make sure a trivial incident like childbirth doesn't interfere with major sporting events. Select the event, from the New York City Marathon to the Grey Cup and Super Bowl, and the blocker will tell you “when not to make

babies.” If you've already gone ahead and done the deed, you can find out what you're going to miss using the birth and labour conflict catcher.

*21 days toward detoxification*

[www.picsmallbiz.com/detox2.htm](http://www.picsmallbiz.com/detox2.htm)

According to the good people at the Botanic Gardens of Hammond, Ind., “by age 30 most of us have collected so much ‘debris’ in our intestinal tract (diverticula, etc.) and colon that fermentation and putrefaction has begun to take place. The result is a constant release of toxins, including noxious gases, into our bloodstream and lymphatic system, which can result in poisoning our bodies!” By sheer coincidence, they have just the product to fix the problem: ELIMITOX 21. For the special cut-rate price of US\$43.95 you get 168 caplets. Act before fermentation reaches crisis proportions! — *Michael O'Reilly*

**EMPOWERMENT** — *Word used to persuade the politically correct that you are involving others in decisions while actually making them yourself.*

— *From A Sceptic's Medical Dictionary by Michael O'Donnell, BMJ Publishing Group, London (available through the CMA Member Service Centre, 888 855-2555).*