

# The Doctor is In

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## Choose All of Your Procedures, Products and Doctors Wisely:

*Your options are vast in the 21st Century*

I am constantly amazed by all of the products and devices that advertise miraculous or life-changing benefits to anyone who is willing to pay a price for them. At times, I have even seen some of these products promoted by well-trained and licensed medical professionals. Their endorsement of these unrealistic health breakthroughs, makes the claims seem more believable—but should it? Medical quackery has been around for centuries and hasn't disappeared from our society today.

Medical quackery is (as defined by *quackwatch.org*) “the promotion of unsubstantiated methods that lack a scientifically plausible rationale.” And, quackery is a derogatory term used to describe the promotion of unproven or fraudulent medical practices. Random House Dictionary describes a “quack” as a “fraudulent or ignorant pretender to medical skill” or “a person who pretends, professionally or publicly, to have skill, knowledge, or qualifications that he or she does not possess.”

### Too Good To Be True...Is Just That

The most famous quack was a “snake oil” salesman by the name of Clark Stanley. In 1906, he was known as the “Rattlesnake King.” He was famous for killing rattlesnakes while delivering his pitch. For just 50 cents, he would sell you a bottle of snake-oil medicine that he claimed could cure anything that was ailing you. Stanley’s snake-oil medicine supposedly came from an Indian medicine man and that his blend of

snake oils could work miracles. In 1917, it was tested and found to have about 99% mineral oil. Thereafter, his business was shut down, but “snake oil” lives on in our lexicon to this day. (Think placebo effect or a medically ineffectual treatment.)

In 1912, a potion named “Mrs. Winslow’s Soothing Syrup” for teething and colicky babies came into wide spread use. It was found to be laced with morphine—and was responsible for the deaths of many infants. In reaction, Congress enacted the Sherley Amendment to prohibit labeling medicines with false therapeutic claims intended to defraud the purchaser, but this was a difficult legal standard to prove. It was not until 1938 that the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act was passed that required products to be proven safe after an “Elixir of Sulfanilamide” containing the poisonous solvent diethylene glycol, killed 107 persons (many of whom were children). In 1962, Congress passed laws requiring greater safety testing and proof of efficacy of products before they could be marketed. Today, both medications and devices are required to go through testing to ensure that they can be used safely and are effective.

How can you tell whether a medical device will live up to the claims made for it? Bob McCoy, curator of the Museum of Questionable Medical Devices, provides tips in his book *Quack! Tales of Medical Fraud*. It states that you should be suspicious if:

- It supposedly can cure just about anything.

- You’re supposed to use it even if there’s nothing wrong with you.
- You can’t find one at a regular doctor’s office.
- It is available only through the mail or at special outlets.
- It is said to use little-known energies that are undetectable by ordinary scientists.
- It can diagnose or cure people living miles away.
- It has a convoluted yet scientific-sounding name.
- It was invented by a “world famous” doctor that is not actually well known.
- It has bright lights, knobs or dials that serve no apparent purpose.
- It shakes, rattles, rolls, sucks, shocks, cools or warms your body.
- The manufacturer isn’t exactly sure how or why it works.
- The FDA has outlawed it.

When you’re considering a new treatment or remedy of some kind, ask yourself and the practitioner this question—has this been proven safe and effective? What it comes down to is this...do your research, read the fine print and as the saying goes, “If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.”

### About Dr. Plott

Todd Plott, MD is a board certified dermatologist and native Texan. He served as the medical director and dermatology expert for a national line of sunscreen products. With 20 years of dermatology research experience Dr. Plott is on the frontier of developments in dermatology therapy. He’s been established as a consultant for multiple pharmaceutical companies to help bring new products to the marketplace and has been recognized for his contributions to new drug development. His new practice, Dermatology Alliance-Keller is currently accepting new patients.