



# **Review of Canadian Sellers of Homeopathic Flu “Vaccines” (Nosodes)**

**November, 28<sup>th</sup> 2014**

**Michael Kruse  
John Monroe  
Jonathan Paynter  
Jamie Williams**

# Review of Canadian Sellers of **HOMEOPATHIC FLU “VACCINES”**



## **Bad Science Watch**

Bad Science Watch is an independent Canadian consumer protection organization dedicated to promoting good science in public policy.

The following was prepared by volunteers and represents what we believe to be an honest, fair, and science-based evaluation. We are an independent body that is funded by private donations and we do not represent any corporate interests.

We can be contacted as follows:

Bad Science Watch  
180 Danforth Ave. P.O. Box 35024  
Toronto, ON, M4K 3P5  
[www.badsciencewatch.ca](http://www.badsciencewatch.ca)  
[info@badsciencewatch.ca](mailto:info@badsciencewatch.ca)  
888.742.3299 voice  
888.813.3569 fax

# Review of Canadian Sellers of HOMEOPATHIC FLU “VACCINES”



## Summary

Using an internet search for Canadian vendors of homeopathic preparations, we found several online stores selling variations of the homeopathic preparation “Influenzinum”. Most of these providers are advertising and selling this product as a preventive or cure for influenza, a virus that is responsible for a very heavy disease burden in Canada. As there is no evidence for the effectiveness of this product, we consider the marketing of these products in this manner to be a danger to health of Canadians. Furthermore, Influenzinum is often marketed as being safer than the flu vaccine, despite the fact that the flu vaccine is known to be a safe and effective preventative treatment for influenza.

## Background

There is a long tradition in the complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) community of anti-vaccination propaganda. Naturopaths and chiropractors have all been implicated in the spread of misinformation (Busse et al, 2008, Campbell et al, 2000, Halper, J., 1981), and homeopaths are among the worst (Lehrke, P. 2001). Despite vaccines having a very good safety record, one of the best among all modalities (IOM, 2013), these groups continue to rail against them and sow confusion among vaccine hesitant parents and patients across Canada.

Homeopathic nosodes are preparations made from bodily tissues and fluids (including faeces, blood, pus, discharges, and saliva) taken from patients suffering from a disease (e.g. measles, anthrax, tuberculosis) (Little, 2007). Once the starting material is obtained, it is sterilized and serially diluted, just like any other homeopathic remedy, to the point where no active ingredient remains. As with other homeopathic remedies, nosodes are taken orally and are promoted as treatments for a wide variety of conditions. The procedure of using nosodes to prevent infectious disease is known as “homeoprophylaxis”.

Every year, a nosode called “Influenzinum” is produced that is purported to contain the strains of influenza that are expected to circulate through the population, or to be made from the annual flu vaccine itself. It is made by various manufacturers at different dilutions, but by Health Canada standards, has to be prepared in a way that prevents any of the infectious elements remaining in solution: in effect, they are sterile products. In addition, as a result of the efforts of Bad Science Watch and our Stop Nosodes campaign, the product must contain the following warning:

“This product is not intended to be an alternative to vaccination.”

We suspected that some homeopaths and supplement marketers would continue to sell the product as an alternative to the yearly flu shot, and we conducted an internet search to determine if our suspicions were correct.

# HOMEOPATHIC FLU “VACCINES”



## Methods and Results

An internet search using the terms “Influenzinum”, “homeopathy” or “homeopathic” and “Canada OR Canadian” found 13 websites that sell a variety of this nosode. Of these, 12 had a Natural Product Number (NPN) or Homeopathic Medicine Number (DIN-HM), showing that they were licensed for sale by Health Canada with the restriction mentioned above. 11 sellers also made claims of treatment of cure for “influenza”. Four of the websites made a direct claim that this product was an alternative to vaccination, with three other websites suggesting indirectly that their product can be used as a vaccine. Only one of the sites contained the statement that the preparation should not be used as an alternative for the flu vaccine.

Language used to sell these products included the following phrases:

“To immunize against the flu, we use the homeopathic remedy Influenzinum. Influenzinum is a remedy made from flu viruses, rendered completely safe and non-toxic by a homeopathic pharmacist.”<sup>1</sup>

“Influenzinum 9c is the only homeopathic flu product that is updated each year based on the flu strains (including H1N1) predicted by the World Health Organization. Specially formulated to stimulate the body's own defense system. Safe and natural, this helps your immune system, not depress it as other methods to prevent illness do.”<sup>2</sup>

“INFLUENZINUM (*emphasis theirs*) is best purchased yearly each fall. Especially useful for people who want flu protection, but do not want to be vaccinated with conventional needles and their potential for harmful side-effects.”<sup>3</sup>

“Boiron Influenzinum [*sic*] is a homeopathic medicine used as a preventative measure for the flu. Based on flu strains, this medicine gets updated yearly with new formulas to stimulate the body's defense system.”<sup>4</sup>

“It's a natural homeopathic alternative to the flu vaccine and does not have any side effects and is safe for everyone.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://littlemountainhomeopathy.wordpress.com/2009/10/15/a-safe-effective-alternative-to-the-flu-vaccine/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.feelgoodnatural.com/health-food/Influenzinum-Flu-Shot-Alternative/DS9804>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.canadianvitaminshop.com/Product/Boiron-INFLUENZINUM-9CH>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nutrichem.com/products/influenzinum-9ch>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nationalnutrition.ca/detail.aspx?ID=3602>

# Review of Canadian Sellers of HOMEOPATHIC FLU “VACCINES”



“A dosage of the remedy is taken once per week for 5 weeks once every fall to prevent the flu. It can be taken in place of or in addition to the flu vaccine for those who choose to.”<sup>6</sup>

“INFLUENZINUM (*emphasis theirs*) Homeopathic medicine is not a vaccine.”<sup>7</sup>

As this research was limited to claims about cure and prevention of influenza by online retailers, it did not include storefront operations, print advertising, or homeopaths that prescribe and sell preparations directly to their patients as vaccine alternatives.

In past research we identified over 170 websites selling homeopathic products direct to Canadian consumers. These products are also sold in many stores and by practitioners across Canada. Given that influenza is but one of many serious diseases for which Canadian homeopaths are promoting “alternatives” (including measles, mumps, and pertussis), this research illustrates the widespread misinformation of Canadian consumers.

## Conclusion

The sale of homeoprophylactic nosodes remains a problem in Canada. There is still no evidence for the efficacy of homeopathic products to treat or prevent influenza or any other ailment<sup>8</sup> (Linde et al,1999, Shang et al, 2005). It remains our position that Health Canada should stop all sale of these and other equally dubious nosodes in the interest of public health and safety. At the very least, Health Canada should take immediate steps to educate the consumer and make it clear that these products should not be used instead of vaccination. Health Canada should also instruct distributors and retailers to immediately cease advertising products with these deceptive and dangerous claims.

## References

Busse, J.W., Wilson, K., and Campbell, J.B. (2008). Attitudes towards vaccination among chiropractic and naturopathic students. *Vaccine* 26, 6237–6243.

Campbell, J.B., Busse, J.W., and Injeyan, H.S. (2000). Chiropractors and Vaccination: A Historical Perspective. *Pediatrics* 105, e43–e43.

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.healthstreet.ca/influenzinum/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.vitepro.ca/Influenzinum-9CH-5-1g-vials-Boiron.html>

<sup>8</sup> also see: <http://www.badsciencewatch.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/BSW-Nosode-2012-NHPD-Pre-Cleared-Monograph-Consultation-Submission.pdf>

# Review of Canadian Sellers of HOMEOPATHIC FLU “VACCINES”



Committee on the Assessment of Studies of Health Outcomes Related to the Recommended Childhood Immunization Schedule; Board on Population Health and Public Health Practice; Institute of Medicine (2013). *Childhood Immunization Schedule and Safety: Stakeholder Concerns, Scientific Evidence, and Future Studies* (National Academy Press).

Halper, J. (1981). Naturopaths and childhood immunizations: heterodoxy among the unorthodox. *Pediatrics* 68, 407–410.

Lehrke, P. (2001). Attitudes of homoeopathic physicians towards vaccina... [Vaccine. 2001] - PubMed - NCBI. *Vaccine* 19, 4859–4864.

Linde, K., Scholz, M., Ramirez, G., Clausius, N., Melchart, D., and Jonas, W.B. (1999). Impact of study quality on outcome in placebo-controlled trials of homeopathy. *J Clin Epidemiol* 52, 631–636.

Little, D. (2007). Nosodes in homeopathy. <http://www.simillimum.com/education/little-library/constitution-temperaments-and-miasms/nih/article.php> . Accessed Feb. 23 2013.

Shang, A., Huwiler-Müntener, K., Nartey, L., Jüni, P., Dörig, S., Sterne, J.A.C., Pewsner, D., and Egger, M. (2005). Are the clinical effects of homoeopathy placebo effects? Comparative study of placebo-controlled trials of homoeopathy and allopathy. *Lancet* 366, 726–732.