

# The Hypocrisy of CVS



By Josh Bloom — September 5, 2019



I just got the following email from CVS: "5 Years Ago We Quit Selling Tobacco."

*We did it to be true to ourselves as a health care company, and for you and your family. And while quitting tobacco was a momentous step, we didn't stop there.*

They sure didn't (emphasis mine).

*With our deep ties in communities all across America, our vantage point also gives us unique opportunities. Each day, we engage with more than 5 million Americans and every one of those encounters is **a chance for us to help you improve your health.***

On the surface, this would seem to be a noble endeavor. But if you look a little deeper it begins to seem like nothing but a shameless PR ploy. That's because, although CVS stopped selling cigarettes, they continue to sell a bunch of junk that will not improve your health one bit but, in some cases, can actually harm it. And they most certainly know this.

## 1. USELESS AND HARMLESS BUT ALSO POTENTIALLY HARMFUL

If you go to the CVS online site and search "homeopathic" there will be 200 products. Here's one of them (Figure 1).

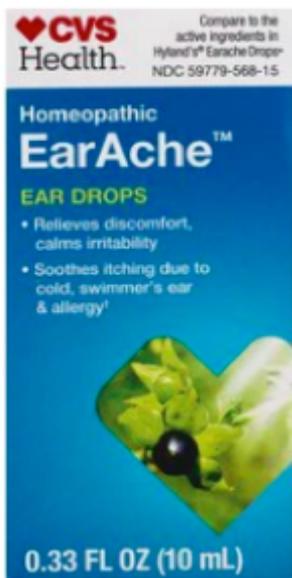
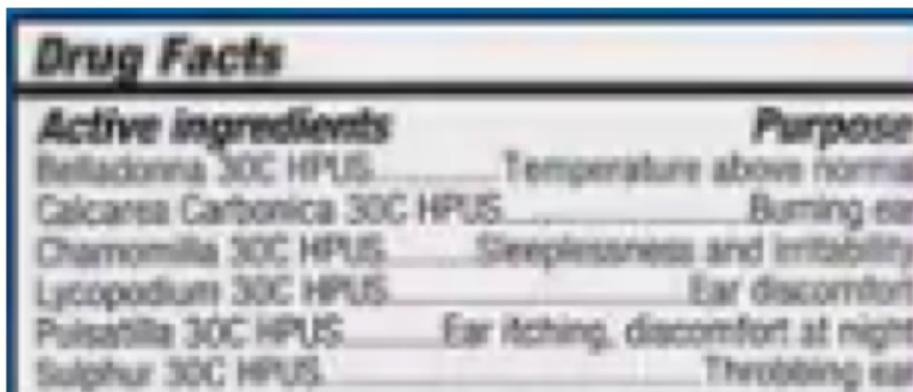
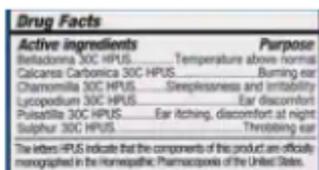


Figure 1. CVS Homeopathic EarAche package.

For \$9.99 you can buy 0.33 ounces of water with absolutely nothing useful in it. This can be ascertained simply by looking at the list of "active ingredients," assuming that you can even read it:



The "active" ingredients are hard to see (top), even when magnified (bottom) so I've taken the liberty of creating a legible and slightly modified version...

Active Ingredient	Stated purpose	What it really does
Belladonna 30C	Temperature above normal	Nothing
Calcarea carbonica 30C	Burning ear	Nothing
Chemonilla 30C	Sleeplessness, irritability	Nothing
Lycopodium 30C	Ear discomfort	Nothing
Pulsatilla 30C	Ear itching, discomfort at night	Nothing
Sulfur 30C	Throbbing ear	Nothing

Legible and (slightly) modified version of the CVS label on homeopathic the ear drops box.

Before I explain why none of those six ingredients can possibly help anyone with anything, I

figured I'd just make up my own ingredients label. It's just as accurate valid as the one on the package...

Active Ingredient	Stated purpose	What it really does
Plutonium 30C	Compound fracture	Nothing
Rabid skunk droppings 30C	Improves your bowling average	Nothing
Moon dust 30C	PTSD, dirty sparkplugs	Nothing
Pez 30C	Foot odor	Nothing
Subway floor extract 30C	Emu allergies	Nothing

Josh's interpretation of the CVS ingredients label.

## 2. WHY ARE BOTH THESE LABELS "ACCURATE?"

This one's easy – 30C. In Homeopathyville 30C refers to how much the original material (whatever it is/was is irrelevant) is diluted. Here's how the dilution process works (Figure 2).

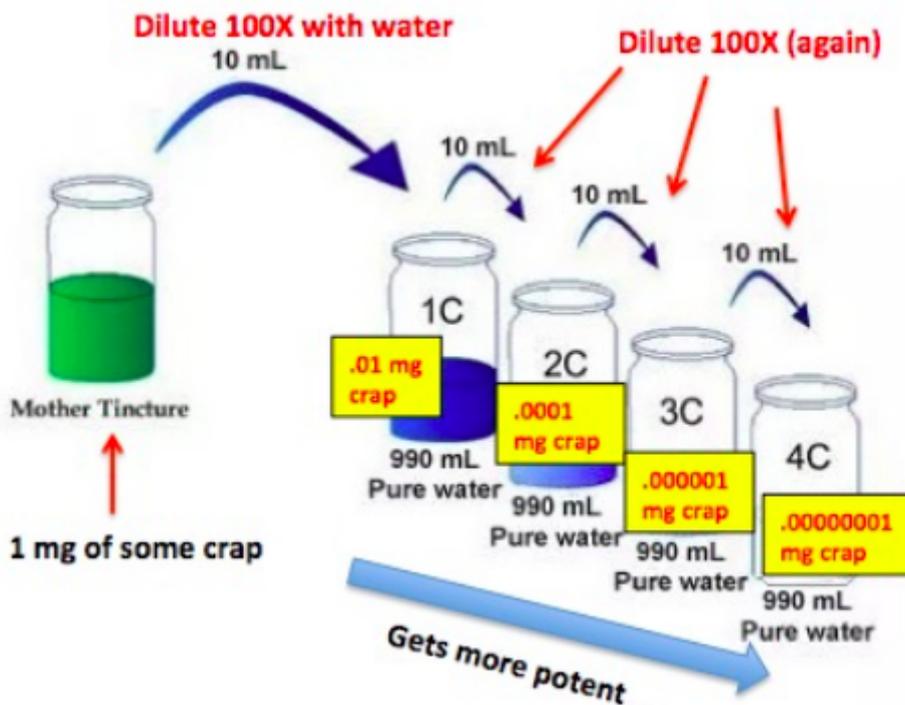


Figure 2. Four serial dilutions make stuff "stronger." The letter "C" indicates a 100-fold dilution. Original image: [Skeptical Raptor](#) [1].

Figure 2 demonstrates one of the many absurdities of homeopathy. If you start with 1 mg of some crap and dilute it four times (4C) the solution will contain only 0.00000001 mg of the same crap – essentially nothing. At 12C there is a 60% chance that the solution will contain a single molecule of the original crap. At 30C things get even crazier:

60X	30C	$10^{-60}$	Dilution advocated by Hahnemann for most purposes; patient would need to consume $10^{41}$ pills (a billion times the mass of the Earth), or $10^{34}$ gallons of liquid remedy (100 billion times the volume of the Earth) to consume a single molecule of the original substance
-----	-----	------------	--

Nothing but water and black magic. Image: [Wikipedia](#) [2]

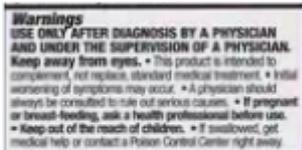
So, whether a bottle contains a 30C solution of belladonna, plutonium, or Pez makes no difference because there is *none of the original substance in the bottle*. Zero. This is the essence of

homeopathy – the absurd notion that when a substance is diluted to the point where there isn't any left it still "works" because the remaining water "remembers" whatever used to be there. This nonsensical theory dates back to 1796 – a time when mercury salts were used as a laxative, and Yellow Fever was treated using bloodletting. Homeopathy, which defies all laws of chemistry, not to mention sanity, has been [debunked 1,800 times](#) [3] is no more than a wet Ouija Board. By selling products based on fairy dust CVS has descended into the world of infamous internet hucksters, like Joe Mercola and Mike Adams.

### 3. HOW CAN AN EXPENSIVE BOTTLE OF WATER BE HARMFUL?

The contents of the bottle can obviously hurt your wallet, but the act of buying it can indirectly hurt you or your kids. Here's why:

#### Warning label (actual size)



**USE ONLY AFTER DIAGNOSIS BY A PHYSICIAN AND UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF A PHYSICIAN.**

**This product is intended to complement, not replace, standard medical treatment Initial worsening of symptoms may occur**

**A physician should always be consulted to rule out serious causes.**

The box of water is small and the warning label is far smaller – so much so that unless you happen to be carrying around a scanning electron microscope, good luck reading it. Which is why I extracted a few key phrases. Let's say that a confused mother, one of many Americans who are terrified of drugs and chemicals, has a kid with an earache. She will see "ear drops" and homeopathic – a word that has come to mean natural, safe, and effective. She will not see the warning label or the multiple disclaimers saying that it should only be used after seeing the pediatrician. If the kid has a serious ear infection he or she will probably be treated with \$9.99 water *instead of going to the pediatrician* (or delaying the visit).

And CVS sells quackery for plenty of other conditions, not just earaches (Figure 3).



Figure 3. CVS sells homeopathic "remedies" for removal of skin tags, nerve pain, cold and flu, leg cramps, sore throats, and sciatica. Please.

### NON-HOMEOPATHIC JUNK TOO

CVS also sells products that are either dangerous, worthless, or both – dietary supplements. Here are three real doozies (Figure 4).



Figure 4. How can a pharmacy sell this stuff?

(Left) DHEA, short for dehydroepiandrosterone, is a [powerful sex hormone and anabolic \(muscle-building\) steroid](#) [4] which is converted in the body to testosterone. There is some question as about how effective it is in building muscle, but [its use is banned](#) [5] by the National Football League, Major League Baseball, and the NCAA. It's not especially safe either:

*DHEA is a hormone. Use of this supplement might increase levels of androgen and have a steroid effect. DHEA also might increase the risk of hormone-sensitive cancers, including prostate, breast and ovarian cancers. If you have any form of cancer or are at risk of cancer, don't use DHEA.*

Source: [Mayo Clinic](#) [6]

And since DHEA is converted to testosterone one needs to also be cognizant of its risks as well.

*You should not receive testosterone if you have prostate cancer, male breast cancer, a serious heart condition, or severe liver or kidney disease. Misuse of testosterone can cause dangerous or irreversible effects. Testosterone injections should be given only by a healthcare professional. Testosterone can lead to serious problems with the heart, brain, liver, endocrine, and mental health systems. Stopping testosterone may also lead to unpleasant withdrawal symptoms.*

Source: [Drugs.com](https://www.drugs.com) [7]

Please tell me why your 16-year old son, who might be trying out for the football team, should be able to waltz into CVS and walk out with a banned anabolic steroid.

(Middle) Prevagen is supposed to help your memory. It not only doesn't, but it cannot. ACSH friend Dr. Joe Schwarcz, who is the Director of the McGill Office for Science and Society, can debunk with the best of them. Joe absolutely obliterates the stuff in his [recent article](#) [8] "*The Right Chemistry: Jellyfish protein, Prevagen and brain function.*"

(Right) Raw spleen? Are they kidding? Who came up with the idea that eating spleen cells is a good idea? Maybe this guy?



Photo: [Wikipedia](#) [9]

## PHARMACEUTICAL GRADE HYPOCRISY

So, CVS maintains that they've taken a "momentous step" by stopping tobacco sales (as if someone forced them to sell them in the first place) and they're "didn't stop there."

No, they didn't. CVS may no longer sell cigarettes but it continues to sell thoroughly worthless products – items that have no place in a pharmacy because they are based on black magic (anything homeopathic), dangerous (DHEA), worthless (Prevagen), or just plain nasty (raw spleen).

*"In your neighborhood CVS Pharmacy, we're continuing to roll out healthier food and snack items, testing vitamins and supplements to confirm they meet our **high standards.**"*

High standards? I don't think so. Not when it sells a bunch of junk. CVS is now writing prescriptions for hypocrisy.

---

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.acsh.org/news/2019/09/05/hypocrisy-cvs-14268>

**Links**

[1] <https://www.skepticalraptor.com/skepticalraptorblog.php/the-results-are-in-homeopathy-is-water-overpriced-water/>

[2] <https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Homeopathy>

[3] <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/1800-studies-later-scientists-conclude-homeopathy-doesnt-work-180954534/>

[4]

[https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16797178#targetText=Dehydroepiandrosterone%20\(DHEA\)%20is%20an%20an](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16797178#targetText=Dehydroepiandrosterone%20(DHEA)%20is%20an%20an)

[5] <https://www.webmd.com/diet/qa/how-can-dhea-supplements-help-with-athletic-performance>

[6] <https://www.mayoclinic.org/drugs-supplements-dhea/art-20364199>

[7]

<https://www.drugs.com/testosterone.html#targetText=Misuse%20of%20testosterone%20can%20cause,such%20as%2>

[8] <https://montrealgazette.com/opinion/columnists/the-right-chemistry-jellyfish-protein-prevagen-and-brain-function>

[9] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannibal\\_Lecter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannibal_Lecter)