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Exposing Medical Fraud
Guest: Michael Berens
Hosted by Andrew Schorr

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Introduction

Andrew Schorr:
Hello, welcome. We’re live on AM570 KVI. Andrew Schorr here. You may well be stuck in traffic. We have the Seattle Marathon, the walkers and the runners going on now. Good luck to you if you are listening. If you are in the airport traffic crush, all the best to you. I hope you left plenty of time, and maybe you are returning to WASU from the Apple Cup; congratulations on your win.

We’re going to expose medical fraud today. Are energy medicine devices hastening the death of some patients, creating false hope and stealing money from desperate patients to benefit criminals living overseas? The answer is yes.

We are going to expose medical fraud in the next hour on Patient Power on AM570 KVI.

Good morning. We are live on AM570 KVI. Andrew Schorr here week after week bringing you significant medical information so you and your family can make smart choices. First of all you may be running or walking in the Seattle Marathon. We have this sort of blanket of fog covering you, embracing you, as you go. Good luck in your efforts there. That’s all for good health. If you are driving please drive carefully. Hope you left time getting to the airport if you are in that big crush that always happens after Thanksgiving weekend. If you are driving over the pass back to Pullman, feeling good about the win, good for you. I’m like Switzerland between the Huskies and WASU because I went to school back in the east. Hopefully you are feeling good about the outcome.

I have been on a campaign along the way to debunk the baloney that is often on even on this radio station, I think, before me, of where people write a check and they make claims or sometimes there are announcements that say, ‘Oh no, it doesn’t cure this and it doesn’t cure that’, but there is always that kind of an implication that this is health care today, and that it can cure or treat or help you with all sorts of things. Many people, and
I hear it time and time again, say, ‘I don’t trust MDs, there is a conspiracy by the AMA, the prescription drug manufacturer’s etc. to take my money and not really help me.’ Really there are other people who are ‘so called’ health care professionals who can expose the secret and cure me when others can’t or take away my pain’.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the show last week, it was last Sunday that a huge series came out in the Seattle Times newspaper, a medical expose’. It was exposing energy medicine devices that we are going to talk about in a minute.

I just want to put into perspective who my guest is today. I went to two journalism schools, the University of North Caroline and Columbia University. What we all hoped someday is that we would be investigative reporters. This was before actually Woodward and Bernstein at the Washington Post. If you think about it, if you know anybody in journalism or even our TV reporters or radio reporters at Fisher Broadcasting, they would all tell you that the rock stars of journalism are the investigative reporters.

One of them is sitting next to me now, and that’s Michael Berens from the Investigations unit at the Seattle Times. Michael and his colleagues worked months and months and months. I imagine they went all over outside the country, traveled far and wide, and did hundreds of interviews to find out that there were energy medicine devices, basically snake oil in boxes, large and small, that were creating false hope for people. Sometimes I would say, hastening the death of some patients because they weren’t getting the scientifically respected care that they needed. They put false hope in this. Their money was taken and often, all too often by practitioners that had plaques on the wall that were really baloney I would say again from some mail order house where you send in your money and they send you a plaque and a certificate, and you put it on your wall and you claim that you can do things that really can’t be done.

Michael Berens is with us from the Seattle Times. Michael, I just get so angry. You’ve spent months and months and months on this and I know, now after these articles that thousands of our listeners have probably seen, and I urge you to go out to Seattletimes.com and look up these miracle machine articles from the past week. It must have really gotten your dander up as you go through this and you just keep peeling back the layers on the onion and you find out, for instance, that there is this William Nelson who was a fugitive from justice in the U.S. He’s living in Budapest, his company makes these devices, 19,000 marketed around the world, 10,000 in the U.S. and he’s making millions, and people are suffering.

**Mr. Berens:**
I think we found that it was just a phenomenal growth in the last few years. Mr. Nelson was of course one of the most unusual characters I’ve ever seen as a journalist. The story basically began when we found that there was a health care clinic in Bellevue, just
a block down from Overlake Hospital, and they were offering treatments on the PAPIMI, this energy device that weighed 260 pounds. They claimed that electromagnetic waves could cure people or actually help them with their pain or swelling. We became intrigued when we found this high glossy clinic, just a block down the street, and there wasn’t one licensed professional working inside this place. From there, we embarked on an international trail that led us to William Nelson in Budapest who was a federal fugitive to another man in Greece who was the actual inventor of the PAPIMI. We found time and time again machine after machine that were made by profiteers not people who were actually interested in health.

Regulation of Medical Devices

Andrew Schorr:
Now, in fairness, there are some devices, some are used in sports medicine with little electrical charges that seem to have some benefit for muscle relaxation and things like that. They are not going to cure cancer, they are not going to permanently take away your pain, and they are not going to treat allergies. There are all these claims that are made.

The FDA has allowed devices through what seems to me almost a laxity in the law to be out there. Why isn’t there regulation? I know our Congressman from Bainbridge Island, Jay Inslee read your articles. He’s all over this now. How has this been able to happen? Not just somebody, a criminal having this stuff imported, but there are companies in the U.S. that make these.

Mr. Berens:
I think it’s a misnomer in many ways. What does FDA approve mean, or FDA registered? It is very much abused, and this is something that we struggle to explain to people. The FDA does not approve devices. They simply register the companies that make them. When you see a company saying their product is FDA approved, that’s a little bit of a deception in some ways. What they are saying is that the FDA has approved ‘us’ to market and sell this device.

The FDA takes a position that it is not their job, and rightly so I believe, to decide what devices can and cannot be sold in America. What they do say is if you are going to sell them, we want to know who you are and we want to make sure you are doing it as safely as possible. A lot of these charlatans, however, slip under the radar, and they are able to register their companies and then they sell devices that appear benign, but then they are marketed at much more deceptive way, such as cures, cancer cures, or AIDS cures, or anything for diseases.
I would say one of the catch phrases, if you want to who are the good guys and who are the bad guys, is that anyone who tells you that they have a medical secret inside a box of wires and circuit boards, they are not telling you the truth more than likely.

**Machine Operators Profit by Giving Hope but Not Proof**

**Andrew Schorr:**
People have spent thousands of dollars, and I know family members who probably would have benefited for months, or years from more traditional treatment, were foregoing that, putting their faith in this, buying a box or going to a practitioner, and there is some suggestion that they died because it if.

**Mr. Berens:**
This is one of the most insidious parts of these charlatans, or these profiteers. They are not just making money off gullible people or desperate and vulnerable people as it turns out, but they are actually diverting people from critical care. They are taking the last dollars of people who have very little money. They are stealing time from people who could have better spent it with their families and preparing for the inevitable perhaps.

A doctor and I were talking, and I was asking what's the popularity of these machines? Why are they so popular? Why do so many thousands of patients turn to them? He said that the problem with conventional medicine is there comes a point where there is just no more hope where they tell you to go home and prepare for death. With these machine operators, they say there is always hope and they always give you that one last glimmer of hope. That's what they provide that conventional medicine often does not. There comes a point where you reach the end of traditional therapy. These machines say there is never an end. Tomorrow another $100 maybe you could live.

**Andrew Schorr:**
Right, but some of the sales people for these devices, the distributors, they are living in big houses, driving BMWs, earning $2,500 commissions on each machine.

**Mr. Berens:**
Let's take the case of William Nelson. This is a man grew up in Ohio. He's a 34-year-old part-time mathematics teacher at Youngstown State University. He gets this idea that he can build these miracle machines. He's always been into the metaphysical, he loves Star Trek. He's just one of these incredibly imaginative guys. He moves to Colorado and makes a machine and starts marketing it as a device that can cure disease and actually diagnose you. The FDA catches wind of it and they tell him, 'Stop. You're not allowed to market a machine like that, that there is no such thing.' He goes and continues on. Eventually he gets indicted in 1996. Basically penniless, he runs off to Budapest and there he sets up another manufacturing set up and builds another machine; the same
one basically that he built in Colorado; and today he is sitting in a five-story building, with a staff of about a dozen people. He has chauffeurs, bodyguards. He rakes in what we estimate three-million dollars a month in gross sales from these devices that sell for about $19,900 a piece. Essentially, it’s a box that plugs into the computer and connects to the patient with a head harness and straps around the wrists and ankles.

Here is a guy who is making millions of dollars, and if you want to believe that a federal fugitive indicted on nine counts of felony health care fraud is a healer, then go ahead.

Andrew Schorr:
We’re going to take a break. We are exposing medical fraud today, thanks to the Seattle Times and their series that they’ve done last week. Michael Berens is representing his investigations team to help us understand more about medical fraud, and really folks, it’s all about what this show is called, Patient Power. Also, buyers beware, as a health care consumer you have to be smart to avoid these scams. We’ll be back with much more Patient Power.

Welcome back to live Patient Power, whether you’re walking or running in the Seattle Marathon and have those headsets on, or if you are stuck in traffic going to the airport, good luck to you and welcome. This is what we do week after week, and actually I do it on the Internet all week as well. Take a look at www.PatientPower.info. It’s the only radio or Internet radio or Internet replay program of its kind in the world, where me, an 11-year leukemia survivor, represent you in trying to connect you with the most authoritative, credible medical information so you and your family can make smart choices. I do it just for that. That’s my mission, to help all of us be smarter.

Marketing of These Devices is High in the Pacific Northwest

Andrew Schorr:
We’ve had many famous doctors come through here, and really some of the most eminent physicians and other health care providers with legitimate degrees from credible medical institutions, and they have been here time and time again. What we haven’t talked about enough is medical fraud, particularly when there are so-called health care providers who aren’t and have no training really, and when are the gizmos they are using, totally unproven?

The Seattle Times investigated that in a series that began last Sunday. You can look it up at www.seattletimes.com. There is a link to that on our website, www.PatientPower.info. The series was entitled Miracle Machines: the 21st Century Snake Oil. One of the authors of that series from the investigative team there is investigative reporter Michael Berens. Michael is with us in the studio.
Michael, so here we are in the Pacific Northwest where we do our program from on Sundays on KVI, and your article says that more of these machines seem to end up here than in any other region. How come?

Mr. Berens:
We’ve asked ourselves that many, many times. I think one, the Pacific Northwest as the west coast as a whole, is more receptive to alternative modalities. Also I think it has to do with lack of enforcement in a sense that the state is very overburdened when it comes to the Department of Health, and it is their job to police these kinds of scams in many ways. Because they have their hands full with so many things, these operators, these charlatans, are able to set up shop with ease. As I said, this story began with a large health care clinic set up a block away from Overlake Hospital without one licensed practitioner in sight. How does that happen, and how do hundreds of these health care clinics set up around the state and no one questions them? Why aren’t patients questioning them, why aren’t other health care professionals questioning them, why aren’t our enforcers?

A third factor, I believe, in addition to the fact that we are so receptive, is that one of the largest sales centers, William Nelson’s sales center for this device called the EPFX, is just a ferry ride away. These are very professional salesmen who set up an elaborate kind of Amway, multilevel marketing scheme that saturates as many of these devices as possible into the community.

We saw, just within the last year, the devices were in treatment booths from the Puyallup Fair to the Ballard Seafest. They are everywhere, the Home Shows, the Fitness Expos, you can’t go anywhere without really seeing them.

Unproven Devices on the Market Today

Andrew Schorr:
Let’s list the names of some of the ones that you’ve investigated that are baloney, as I say. There is the EPFX.

Mr. Berens:
The EPFX, which has this bizarre made up name, it also goes by the QXCI, or the SCIO. Now, let me put one caveat. These machines are registered legally as biofeedback machines; however, what we’re showing is that they are being used as diagnostic or treatment devices. If they were to be used as they are actually licensed, they would be legal; however, these operators are not.
Another device, completely different is the PAPIMI. It is a 260-pound device. It shoots electromagnetic waves. Another machine we wrote about is made by BioMeridian. It’s a company out of Utah, and it sells a device called the Vantage. When you see that display, they claim to be able to assess the healthiness of the organs in your body.

I think that’s the clue with any of these devices. Any electronic device that claims externally that it can diagnose what is going on inside your body you should be very suspicious of.

**Andrew Schorr:**
Let’s take a call. Joan is with us from Lynnwood. Joan you are on the air. Welcome to Patient Power. What have you uncovered?

**Caller:**
I haven’t uncovered anything but I’ve heard of a machine, I’m not sure of the exact pronunciation of it, Rice or Rifes and supposedly one of the only things I’ve heard is that they claim that it helps the bones heal faster.

**Andrew Schorr:**
Okay, Michael, have you heard of that one?

**Mr. Berens:**
Yes Rife is a very popular technology. It actually describes a gentleman from the early 1900s who dabbled in building these machines and Rife now is a category of frequency-based devices. You’ll see some of them, they have tubes with electricity flowing through them, or they’ll have glass enclosures. You see all kinds of different Rife machines. There is a significant following of Rife practitioners here in Seattle. Most of the machines are black market. In other words they are not registered in any way by the FDA. Basically they are considered black market machines that purport to be able to do all kinds of things to the body through the use of frequencies.

**Andrew Schorr:**
Is there proof?

**Mr. Berens:**
No and that’s, I think, the operative word. There is just no proof at this point. A lot of these operators will point you to pseudo science, or studies that actually don’t exist, that are actually shams in of themselves. It’s very difficult for a patient to differentiate what’s real and what’s not.
Andrew Schorr:
We’re going to talk more about that. Joan, thank you for listening and calling in.

Michael, we’re going to take a break, and when we come back, we’ll talk about the fact that these are not stupid people who fall for this stuff. You were just saying that it’s very difficult for the consumer to investigate this labyrinth of studies and plaques on the walls, and we'll talk about what advice you’d give people. We’re going to take a break and then come back with that. This is all on Patient Power on AM570 KVI. We'll be right back.

How Smart People Can Find Themselves Trying Sham Therapies

Welcome back live to Patient Power, Andrew Schorr happy to talk about exposing medical fraud today. I wish I could spend months and months and months to follow the trail of charlatans, so-called health care providers and show the ones who are just criminal or laughing all the way to the bank while they steal the hope and money of vulnerable people. It’s happening all too often, which is why you and your family have to get smart.

Now Michael Berens we talked about here in the northwest people fall for this. We want to believe it. In California and Oregon maybe we’re more open to this. Maybe more people believe there is a conspiracy of MDs and RNs and LPNs and people with legitimate degrees, that they are all working together, and as you say sometimes medical science says that this is all they can do for you and, we say what else can you do?

I have to share a story myself. My daughter had a chronic stomach problem. Lots of pain over many years, anemia, etc. We kept going and saying can acupuncture help, and we tried that, and we thought well, millions of Chinese can’t be wrong. Certainly acupuncture in some areas has helped people. Then we to found ourselves with this energy medicine doc. She was doing all kinds of weird stuff. We went through one session. Both my daughter and I looked at each other and said ‘this is hocus-pocus’. We just did not feel comfortable.

Now, did we get to research it? No. Was she in pain? Yes. Was I a parent at my wits end? Yes. So it can happen to any of us. So it’s intelligent people, I like to think I’m intelligent, who fall for this, but some people go way down the line. Thousands of dollars and many, many visits. Maybe they even buy a machine. How does it happen?

Mr. Berens:
In talking to patients they tell me that it is very difficult to know what’s it’s like to be in pain until you are in pain and to understand that you have a disease, as you would know Andrew with yourself, that you focus on it. You become obsessed with yourself, your body, your pain, and your disease. You get on the Internet and you spend countless
hours researching it. You start looking at every breakthrough, every study. I’ve talked to families who said their loved one thought that they would actually be the first person to find the cure, to find the modality that would help.

Time and time again we’ve talked to people who said, you don’t understand what it’s like to have a disease, or a terminal disease or chronic pain and how it changes your every thought and your every movement. It’s those kinds of people then that become the prime targets for charlatans because they offer you that lifeline, that lifeboat where maybe you can find relief. You could find a cure, perhaps. This is how smart, intelligent, just fantastic people fall prey to these scams.

**Andrew Schorr:**
Let’s tell some individual stories. There was the lady who had cancer, and she turned away from her doctors even though her son didn’t agree with that. She used her money. What happened to her? Tell us that story.

**Mr. Berens:**
This is a sad story. This was a married couple who were successful business people in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her husband had leukemia, and he went through chemotherapy. It was very painful. He went through the side effects of numerous drugs, and the wife watched this for a period of a year or two, and unfortunately he eventually died of his leukemia.

Before his death he started looking at all the alternative modalities and he tried just about anything that could be bought. He tried it, and nothing worked for him, but when the wife began to feel pain in her own body, the widow now at this point, she decided not to go to the hospital where she had watched her husband go and die through the different treatments. She was convinced, through some other practitioners, specifically a woman who was using the EPFX, the machine made by the federal fugitive, that this machine could diagnose and actually cure whatever was wrong with her body. As she kept getting worse, the practitioner, Sigrid Myers, who by the way is unlicensed, although she had about half a dozen to a dozen certificates on her wall claiming various health care titles, she kept saying the machine could help.

Unfortunately JoAnn Burggraf, the widow believed. She believed, and she believed up to the day she died. What happened was that she had gotten so bad that the son had gone over to the home and knocked on the front door and said, “Mom, let me in”. Week after week the mother would refuse to answer the door because she didn’t want to hear her son complain about her health. Finally she was so bad the son was able to convince her to go to the hospital. An ambulance was called; they took her to a nearby suburban hospital. She was so bad that the life-flighted her to the bigger hospital, and she died within hours. It turns out that she had undiagnosed leukemia. She died in incredible
pain, believing in a device that was going to help her she believed, but a device that never had a chance.

Andrew Schorr:
Well, you have many stories like that, unfortunately; some that made it to the paper, and I'm sure others that you just didn’t have room for.

Mr. Berens:
Dozens.

Andrew Schorr:
Oh my goodness. Let’s take a call from Clay in Seattle. Clay, you’re on the air. Welcome to Patient Power.

Caller:
While I was on hold you started to touch on the subject that I was wanting to talk about. My main question, what I was going to say, is why would people find it so surprising that people when they are told that they have a terminal illness would go to any extent to save their lives when our government lies to us all the time. I mean it’s very evident in the news. We always feel lied to. We’ve heard that there are cures for this and that for years and years and years. They’ve done testing on syphilis and things on people just to see what would happen. Why would it be surprising if people who had a terminal illness wouldn’t try anything?

Andrew Schorr:
No, it’s not surprising. I remember years ago people used to go to Mexico for peach pits, laetrile, and it took years to figure that out, and there were studies. I understand that. We’re going to talk about that Clay because I think it’s a good point. Nobody is completely in the white hats here but what it does come down to for you or me is, we have to keep our wits about us. Whether it’s the traditional medical system, whether it’s alternative medicine, whatever, we still have to keep our wits about us. You’re right, people say maybe there is something else.

Caller:
I was diagnosed with HIV in the early 1980s. Everybody around me was dying. I didn’t trust the doctors. My friends were dying. I didn’t trust the doctors if they were going to throw me on AZT and kill me. I started reading every book and buying everything I could get my hands on, and I’m still here today. I detoxified my body. I killed all the parasites in my body. I read books, I bought $50 and $60 and $70 and $80 books because I thought it would save my life, and I didn’t go to the doctor until the drugs seemed to be more safe than everything. Now I happen to be a firm believer in the drugs that are keeping me alive.
**Andrew Schorr:**
That’s what I was going to ask you. Do you take any prescription medicines now?

**Caller:**
Absolutely. Now that they are safe and everybody around me is not dying. I do take them. Back then, and I’m taking about the early 80s, everybody that took those drugs died faster than I was dying.

**Andrew Schorr:**
I have friends where that happened. I should mention, by the way, that next week we’re going to do a whole show on HIV, with Dr. Harrington from Harborview Medical Center.

Clay, I’m going to let you go because the phone is ringing, but thank you for listening and sharing your perspective on this. I really appreciate it.

As you can hear, there’s a lot of pain out there. He has his HIV story. One of the things is that in the traditional health care system, here if you are diagnosed with cancer or HIV, people often don’t have time for you. Maybe some of the things that are being tried there you can imagine when AIDS was first discovered, what works, or in cancer what works?

**Mr. Berens:**
The traditional health care system is broken, absolutely. There is just no doubt about it. In fact not to toot the Seattle Times horn but just a few years ago we did a large series called ‘Suddenly Sick’ and it was about how the pharmaceutical companies invent diseases to sell more pills. We have tried to cover the full spectrum of this.

I think the last caller actually touched on a point that is very, very important. It’s important for a patient to take control of their own therapy and their own treatments and to question everything just as this gentleman did. That was very excellent. What you want to do is try to find complimentary modalities. Don’t do one thing over the exclusion of another. If you want to try an electro-stim machine, go ahead, but make sure you go the doctor and get yourself checked out as well. If you do them in compliment with each other, it’s a lot safer.

**Andrew Schorr:**
Right, and the other thing I’ve said, time and time again, and I come at it as a cancer patient, is assemble a true health care team, people as best you can determine are credible, have accurate credentials, etc. Do your homework there. Then you get them talking to one another as well, and you share information back and forth. For instance when there are people saying, Andrew take this pill or that, over the counter or not, but
independent of my cancer doctor, I went back to the cancer doctor and said, well, is there was any evidence that XYZ that I can get in the health food store can help? The doctor said, 'Well, there is no evidence about this, but there is a study that shows this can be harmful and actually help cancer cells grow. Please don’t do that.'

You’ve got to be open about it and not think that there are people who wear white coats at hospitals who are out to get you. Share information. Of course, obviously, do your best to find out who are the best providers for you.

We’re going to take another break and when we come back, I’m not surprised, there is Sandra from Kent. She wants to give a positive story about the EPFX, and we’ll hear from her. Sandra, I just want to warn you we know, that I know and from Michael’s investigation, I’m sure he’ll have a point counterpoint here, that there are many people who have made thousands and thousands of dollars from the sales and marketing of these machines, and so we’re going to see what your positive story is. Hold on to your hat folks, it’s coming up next on Patient Power.

Welcome back live to Patient Power. Okay, so I’m going to get in big trouble for this, but I want you to listen. Basically anybody can buy the time on radio and whether it’s Fisher Broadcasting or sometimes even CBS or NBC, they don’t have the staff to do the scientific research to see if something really makes sense.

You heard the ad a minute ago for some pills you could take to help men like me with their prostate and urinary problems and things like that. That would be great news, and we’ve had many urologists on and listened to that. I’m not saying they have the only answer, but you’ve got to look at this. You hear them push the 800 number, and there are a number of radio shows that buy the time on KVI and many other stations earlier in the morning that say, 'Buy this, buy this'. Listen carefully folks at the beginning and the end of each show. There are these bold disclaimers from the broadcasting companies. They are not endorsing it, they don’t know if there is proof or not. So, you’ve got to be smarter, and that goes for the commercials too.

Who sponsors Patient Power? The University of Washington Medical Center, Harborview Medical Center, Swedish Medical Center and Virginia Mason has been a sponsor, Evergreen Health Care. These are very, I think, credible organizations. There are others, MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Northwestern University, and Seattle Cancer Care Alliance. Why do they sponsor Patient Power? Because they want to bring accurate information to you, but all they can do is help you be smarter. In the end you make a choice.

Okay, we have Michael Berens with us from the Seattle Times, a rock star journalist I like to say. We’re blessed that he has come to Seattle from The Chicago Tribune. We have
recruiting for football players and all that, and David Boardman of the Seattle Times
recruited Michael to come and be part of the investigation unit. Now they have done this
expose’ on medical fraud.

We’ve been talking about this snake oil of the 21st century, energy medicine devices, the
ones that are marketed with claims that go through the roof. The machine that has been
particularly featured is called the EPFX. The man who runs that empire is a federal
fugitive. He’s based in Budapest, Hungary. He’s making millions. There are distributors
all around the northwest and around the country, and they make a lot of money too.
How much did one person here make a day Michael?

**Mr. Berens:**
It was a week; one regional manager told me she’s making $7,000 a week.

**Andrew Schorr:**
They are taking your money. Now let’s find out. Sandra has a positive comment about
the EPFX. Sandra, you’re on the air. Welcome to the lion’s den. Sandra, are you still
there? Sandra hung up I guess. So we don’t have her. She was holding, supposedly
with a positive comment about the EPFX.

**Testimonials are Not Scientific Evidence of Effectiveness**

**Andrew Schorr:**
Is there any evidence? What's positive about this box of wires?

**Mr. Berens:**
That’s a tough question. Let’s talk about it scientifically. We don’t even know what’s in
this box. It’s a bunch of wires and circuit boards. It professes to be able to detect what
is wrong inside your body. Well, that would be phenomenal if it were true. It’s not. It’s
not proven. There is nothing that shows this can happen. The EPFX is a very insidious
device. When you look at it on the surface it looks like a biofeedback device. When you
look at its software you find that it incorporates some bizarre, bizarre therapies.

**Andrew Schorr:**
Sandra is back. Sandra are you there?

**Caller:**
Yes. How do you do. How are you this morning?

**Andrew Schorr:**
We’re fine. So you have a positive comment about the EPFX?
Caller:
I do. I wondered if you guys wanted to take a positive comment.

Andrew Schorr:
Yes, just give us the evidence for it.

Caller:
Let me tell you, someone that I knew told me about this device. A friend of mine, because we're interested in alternative things, had mentioned to me about this, and I have been living like in depression for a lot of years as a result of a brain injury. So I was interested, and I had a session, and I would say that the next day, which surprised me, and I'm usually not into machines actually, that my depression lifted. This was several months ago so I thought, wow this is amazing, and I actually waited for myself to kind of drop back in, but I never did drop into a depression, so I looked around for another practitioner, and I thought, well I'll just see if I'm on a roll or if this was really good or what. So I had another session, and I had always been really weak. I mean for many, many years because a lot of disconnect was going on between my brain and my body because a brain injury. I had a session and the next day, which was really surprising to me, I felt really strong, physically strong. I’m 59 years old, and I was about 37 years old when I had the injury to my brain.

Andrew Schorr:
Sandra, I have a couple of questions for you. First, do you have any connection with the company?

Caller:
Yes. I bought one of these. I was very excited.

Andrew Schorr:
Okay, and Sandra do you distribute them?

Caller:
I am just learning to become a practitioner.

Andrew Schorr:
Okay, Sandra, I have to move on. So thank you for your positive story. I’m going to get some comments from Michael because I think he’s met people in that situation along the way. Thank you for calling in.
Caller:
You’re welcome. I’m glad to hear that you at least took my call, and I would have liked to speak a little longer on this.

Andrew Schorr:
I know, but we only have an hour. Thank you. Bye.

Caller:
I know and I get that.

Andrew Schorr:
She bought one, she’s becoming it sounds like a distributor. Folks, I’m just going to say let’s just listen carefully, and then we’ll have the expert, the investigative journalist weigh in on this.

First of all I want you to think about something. We haven’t talked about it on the air but there is a thing called the placebo effect. When they do clinical studies, they give some people something like a sugar pill in some kinds of studies and some of those people do better. Then they look at the prescription medicine that they are investigating. Do those people do better still? Then if they do well enough then that drug might get FDA approval with those rigorous statistics. Some people do better.

We don’t know the cause, the whole deal of Sandra’s brain injury or depression, etc. so it’s difficult to take this testimonial, if you will, and extrapolate and say, whoa, I’m going to buy a device, maybe I’m even going to distribute it to others. So ask questions. That doesn’t mean that’s your story and, again, she has a financial interest in it now too. Michael?

Mr. Berens:
I think it’s great that Sandra has found relief with the device. I think what we are talking about is not about people who try something who felt that it worked for them. No one is trying to say that that’s wrong. What we are saying is that if someone like Sandra takes the device though and tries to tell someone else that it can help their depression, then I think there is a problem with that. This device cannot cure depression. As you said, the placebo effect is a well-documented, scientific phenomenon where 30 to 50 percent of people, even if they are hooked up to a complete bogus device will walk away and say they feel better.

This is the key to these machines. You won’t find any science behind them. You’ll find hundreds and hundreds of testimonials. I’ve been inundated by people who said it cured their cancer, it got rid of their Alzheimer’s, and it made their body healthier. That’s what they have going for them, people who feel better. What is insidious again is the people
who sell these and then set themselves up as practitioners, self-made practitioners, who all of a sudden are charging other vulnerable people for these therapies.

If you look at this device, look at the EPFX on the website, go to Google and just type in EPFX, you’ll see dozens of pictures on the web. It’s got a metal plate on the top of the device. This metal plate, you can put your hair or your blood or some biologic on it, and it claims it can analyze the cellular structure of a person’s body. This device claims it can treat you long distance. You don’t even have to be hooked up to it to be treated. This is how they make even more money.

**EPFX and the Lance Armstrong Myth**

**Andrew Schorr:**
Right. Now, I want to get to the story about Lance Armstrong. In your articles there were supposed claims that the chiropractor who treated Lance Armstrong and other world-class cyclists, used this device and was in favor of it. You went back to him, and what did you find out?

**Mr. Berens:**
I bumped into Dr. Jeffrey Spencer when I was in Budapest, and I was meeting with William Nelson. I became intrigued with the chiropractor to Lance Armstrong and why was he at this conference talking about this device that I think the science shows is absolutely bogus. As it turns out Dr. Spencer is being paid $5,000 a day by William Nelson’s largest distributor, the Quantum Alliance, which is based right up here in Victoria. Dr. Spencer, it turns out, as part of his promotion of this device took it on two Tour de France’s and used it on the American Cycling Team. Whether the team knew they were being test subjects for this or marketing subjects, I don’t know.

Over the course of time, it became legend that Lance Armstrong was himself treated on this machine, and Dr. Spencer would write articles calling EPFX his secret weapon on Tour de France victories. It became a myth that grew and grew. When I called Lance Armstrong’s people, they said they never heard of the device and they didn’t know anything about it. They were outraged and have issued cease and desist orders across the world now, trying to get Lance’s name separated from the EPFX.

**Andrew Schorr:**
Now as you’ve exposed this, now the chiropractor is saying, ‘Whoops’.

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Mr. Berens:
The chiropractor has had a change of heart. He’s decided that despite the $5,000 a day that he is being paid, it’s not worth the negative publicity, and he’s embarrassed to be attached to a device that on close examination any medical professional will tell you, is absolutely bogus.

Andrew Schorr:
We are going to take another break and get some final comments from Michael Berens from the Seattle Times investigations unit and just help you walk away from the show and ask tougher questions. We’ll ask Michael to give you sort of some suggestions he would do even for his own family and how to get credible health information. We’ll be right back with more Patient Power right after this.

Why You Should Check the Credentials

Andrew Schorr:
Welcome back to Patient Power. Dennis and Rick, our attorneys on KVI will be on next, and I may need an attorney when this show is over, because we are debunking medical myths really, particularly related to this whole energy machine medicine. Michael Berens is with us from the Seattle Times. Michael, just in the couple of minutes we have left, what would you say to people out there who say, ‘I’m in pain, I’m desperate, I need some relief. How do I differentiate between what’s real and what practitioner really has credentials and what doesn’t because it’s so difficult for me? Are there little warning signs or questions to ask?’

Mr. Berens:
I think the warning signs are obvious and that is if anyone tells you they have a secret, be suspicious. As far as a practitioner goes, the Department of Health here in Washington operates a website where you can check the credentials of any health care professional. Again if you go to the Seattle Times website, we have all these bookmarked as part of the series, phone numbers and websites that you can go to where you can check out your own practitioner. Many states do this as well. The FDA operates many searchable databases on the web that are very simple. All you have to do is type in names into a search box where you can determine whether a device is actually registered. You can actually see who manufactures it.

If you do get stuck, call a doctor and ask them to help refer you to specific scientific studies of this device or this therapy. You have to ask questions. There is no easy way, unfortunately.
Andrew Schorr:
Again, if you ask questions of other person you saw who is in a back room or maybe even a slick office somewhere, obviously they may give you a shell game of answers and then they have plaques all over the wall. Where did those plaques come from? I know in your articles you showed that many people just send in money to some post office box somewhere and a very professional looking certificate arrives.

Mr. Berens:
I think I could be a doctor within about two days if I had enough money. For about $7,000 I can be a doctor of some sort. It’s easy to buy credentials, and a lot of people do. That’s why you want to check with state agencies, you want to get second opinions. You want to go on the Internet and do some searching. The EPFX has been written about by many people who are trying to sell the machine but also by people who have tried to expose it as well. You’ll find those differing opinions and you can sort it out for yourself.

Andrew Schorr:
Remember, certainly there are stories of people who got well doing this or that. Whether it was one of these machines, what that the cause? I don’t think so, but things happen. We’ve talked about the placebo effect; we’ve thought, look, there is a lot we don’t know about our bodies and about medicine, but that doesn’t mean just because something seemed to work for somebody, or there are other factors going, that it is going to work for you. If somebody is making the claims that it works for everybody, or most people, you’ve got to be really suspicious and look for the evidence.

Thank you Michael for being with us. Thank you for what you do at the Seattle Times. It is really a delight and honor as a journalist to have you here. I really appreciate it. The Seattle Times series is ‘Miracle Machines, the 21st Century Snake Oil’. You can go to Seattletimes.com. This is what we do on Patient Power. As always, knowledge can be the best medicine of all. Thank you for joining us. Next week we are going to talk about HIV and then the week after that we’re going to give people some sense of what can be done with spinal surgery. Have a great run in the Seattle Marathon. Hopefully traffic won’t be a problem for you if you are going to the airport. See you next week. Andrew Schorr signing off.

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