

US warns 7 companies over fraudulent coronavirus claims

March 9 2020, by Linda A. Johnson



This Aug. 2, 2018, file photo shows the U.S. Food and Drug Administration building behind FDA logos at a bus stop on the agency's campus in Silver Spring, Md. U.S. regulators warned several companies to stop selling soaps, sprays and other concoctions with false claims that they can treat the new coronavirus or keep people from catching it. The warnings were emailed Friday, March 6, 2020, to companies based in the U.S., Canada and the U.K. and were announced Monday. Nearly all the targeted companies had complied by Monday morning, with mentions of the virus or products to treat it taken off their websites. (AP

Photo/Jacquelyn Martin, File)

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The letters, sent jointly by the Food and Drug Administration and the Federal Trade Commission, warned the companies their products for treating COVID-19 were fraudulent, "pose significant risks to [patient health](#) and violate federal law."

There are no approved treatments for the new virus. Potential treatments and vaccines now in testing won't be ready for many months or more than a year, but fake ones keep popping up.

The two agencies sent letters to these companies: Vital Silver, Quinessence Aromatherapy Ltd., N-Energetics, GuruNanda LLC, Vivify Holistic Clinic, Herbal Amy LLC and The Jim Bakker Show.

Last month, Bakker's streaming program aired an episode in which a guest of the disgraced televangelist promoted colloidal silver—silver particles in liquid—claiming it had been tested on previous coronavirus strains and eliminated them in hours.

Such scams typically flourish during epidemics of new diseases, including after the 2015-16 Zika virus outbreak. The scams often

prominently include glowing testimonials from supposedly cured people, but in fine print state the products aren't intended to treat or cure any medical condition.

The seven companies' products ranged from inexpensive items to pricey ones, such as Herbal Amy's \$155 Corona Protocol—four bottles of tinctures and tea.

In an email, proprietor Amy Weidner said Herbal Amy isn't selling treatments, just herbs.

"Within the herbal product description I simply quoted an herbalist. That quote has been removed to adhere to the FDA requirements," Weidner wrote. The product was still on her site Monday.

GuruNanda and N-Energetics issued statements that they had removed the claims cited by the FDA.

On Monday morning, Vital Silver's website was offering products ranging from a fine mist spray for \$7.99 to a monthly subscription for soap, gel and "structured silver minerals" for \$46.90. By Monday afternoon, the website was inaccessible. Jennifer Hickman, identifying herself as the [business owner](#), wrote in an email that she was unaware her [company](#) was violating FDA standards and had removed all statements concerning COVID-19 from the website and [social media](#).

The FDA also said it was working with online marketplaces such as Amazon and had gotten them to remove more than three dozen fake coronavirus products.

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