

Federal court blocks Texas health center from touting 'ozone therapy' as coronavirus treatment

28 April 2020, by Kristine Phillips



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

A Texas wellness company was barred from promoting "ozone therapy" as treatment for coronavirus following a lawsuit by the Justice Department alleging that the claim is false and could lead to harmful health consequences, the agency announced Friday.

Purity Health and Wellness Centers, Inc. in Dallas used its Instagram account to claim to [potential customers](#) that its [ozone](#) treatments can cure and prevent COVID-19, according to a complaint filed earlier this week by [federal prosecutors](#) in Texas. One post said: "The CORONAVIRUS is here in the U.S.. The only prevention is ozone. #coronavirus #ozonetherapy."

In other posts, the company wrote:

"Concerns over CORONAVIRUS—you don't have to worry if you do ozone! #coronavirus #epidemic #ebola #ozonetherapy."

"Corona Virus update: ozone eradicates lethal viruses and bacteria. #coronavirus #ozonetherapy."

A federal judge on Thursday granted a permanent injunction barring Purity Health and Wellness from making such claims. Under an agreement with the Justice Department, the company is not admitting it committed fraud, but it agreed to stop making false representations linking ozone treatments to COVID-19.

As of Friday, images promoting ozone therapy remain on the company's Instagram account, although posts claiming it can treat COVID-19 appear to have been deleted.

Attorney General William Barr has directed all 94 U.S. attorneys to aggressively crack down on criminal activities meant to exploit the pandemic for profit. Several have been charged, including a man who was accused of trying to sell \$750 million worth of face masks that didn't exist and another who was allegedly hoarding and price gouging personal protective equipment.

A criminal complaint was filed today in [federal court](#) in Central Islip charging Amardeep Singh with violating the Defense Production Act of 1950 by hoarding personal protective equipment (PPE) at a warehouse in Brentwood, New York, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and price-gouging customers of his retail store in Plainview, New York. If convicted, Singh faces up to one year in prison.

Earlier this week, the Justice Department announced it has disrupted hundreds of online scams tied to the pandemic. These include a fake website to solicit donations to the American Red Cross for coronavirus relief efforts and websites pretending to belong to government programs and organizations to trick people into giving personal

information.

Erin Nealy Cox, U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Texas, said Purity Health and Wellness exploited the pandemic for profit by peddling bogus treatments.

"The Department of Justice will not stand by and permit the fraudulent promotion of supposed COVID-19 treatments that do no good and that could be harmful," said Assistant Attorney General Jody Hunt of the Justice Department's Civil Division. "We are working with law enforcement and agency partners to stop those who attempt to profit by selling useless products during this pandemic."

Ozone, a toxic gas, "has no known useful medical application," according to the Food and Drug Administration.

Investigation into the company began last week, when an FBI special agent found the Instagram posts. According to court records, the company's owner told a caller, who was posing as a potential customer, that ozone treatment is safe for children and would eradicate viral and bacterial infections.

The owner also claimed that such treatments were 95% effective in treating COVID-19 and that doctors had recommended an "ozone steam sauna" for coronavirus patients, authorities alleged.

There are no approved drugs or therapeutics to prevent or treat COVID-19. Several medications, including hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine—touted by President Donald Trump as a potential "game changer"—are under investigation in clinical trials as potential COVID-19 treatments. But the Food and Drug Administration has warned that the malaria drugs have led to serious heart rhythm problems and should not be used outside hospital or clinical trial settings.

During a White House briefing Thursday, Trump speculated about using "light inside the body" and disinfectants to treat COVID-19. The president floated the use of disinfectants "by injection," triggering warnings from health experts and companies, including Lysol. The company said

"under no circumstances" should its product be used as treatment.

Trump later said he was being sarcastic and he was not encouraging the use of disinfectants, though he maintained that sunlight might be a viable treatment for coronavirus.

©2020 USA Today

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

APA citation: Federal court blocks Texas health center from touting 'ozone therapy' as coronavirus treatment (2020, April 28) retrieved 25 June 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-federal-court-blocks-texas-health.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.