

AUTISM TREATMENT

Quack addicts

WHILE Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg is a fan of science-based medicine, and with his wife has vowed to spend \$3bn to try to cure all diseases, his site still plays host to promoters of cranky treatments for autism that are medically unsound and potentially abusive towards children.

Despite complaints, Facebook allows proponents of this "cure" – which involves giving children with autism a bleach solution to drink, along with daily enemas – to remain on the site because apparently they "do not violate community standards". The procedure revolves around two chemicals: the so-called "miracle mineral solution" or "master mineral solution", aka MMS; and CD, or CDS. Their chemical names are, respectively, sodium chlorite and chlorine dioxide.

MMS, or sodium chlorite, is usually sold as water-purification drops. It's not used on its own and has to be "activated" with an acid such as citric acid (found in citrus fruits), at which point CD, or chlorine dioxide, forms. This reaction is used, legitimately and safely, in food production to kill bacteria on certain foods – poultry, for example. But it is also used to bleach wood pulp, for chlorine dioxide is a bleach. While it can be used safely in very low concentrations to kill harmful bacteria, drinking the concentrated solutions recommended by proponents of these treatments can cause nausea, diarrhoea, severe vomiting and life-threatening low blood pressure.

Parents are also instructed to give their children daily enemas, at home, with chlorine dioxide solution. Enemas are a potentially dangerous procedure even if carried out with plain water or saline: done incorrectly they can cause electrolyte imbalance and damage to the rectal tissues. These risks are increased for children, who have smaller bodies and thinner tissues.

Why are parents forcing vulnerable children to swallow drinks and endure daily enemas that contain dangerously large doses of a bleach solution? Because they have been convinced that such treatments can cure conditions like autism.

One organisation in particular, called "Healing the Symptoms Known as Autism", is headed by Kerri Rivera. Its main Facebook group, CD Autism, has more than 7,500 members. Rivera's book, detailing the treatment "protocols", is for sale in various formats via Amazon.

The idea of chlorine dioxide as a cure-all was started by one Jim Humble, "archbishop of the Genesis II Church of Health and Healing". In a recent report for ABC News in the US, he backtracked on his claims, and his website containing instructions on preparing chlorine dioxide solutions has since become unavailable.

There is no evidence that drinking chlorine dioxide, or using chlorine dioxide enemas, can cure autism, or anything else. But there is plenty of evidence that these "treatments" can be extremely harmful.

One campaigner is routinely sent photographs and screenshots from the CD Autism Facebook group and other online forums. They frequently show images of string-like structures that proponents of chlorine dioxide treatment say are "parasites". They are not. They are mucus and intestinal lining, sometimes bloodied, shed during the harsh enema procedures people are forcing their children to undergo.

Few people seem to be aware this is happening, although authorities have begun to take action. In the UK, the Food Standards Agency has re-issued a warning over MMS; and in August a family court judge ordered that the child of a man who sold equipment on his website to administer chlorine dioxide enemas should be taken into council care.

How long before Facebook and others remove the proponents of this "treatment" from their platforms?

IMDB SCANDAL

Lords a-sleeping?

ESTABLISHMENT links between UK security company Protection Group International (PGI Ltd) and the global IMDB financial scandal are even stronger than previously reported – as are the links between the firm and some of those allegedly taking money from the huge Malaysian public fund for their own private gain (see *Eyes* 1426 & 1428).

The IMDB fund was set up by Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak in 2009 to invest in joint ventures to help his developing nation. But in July, US officials said that "from 2009 through 2015, more than \$3.5bn in funds belonging to IMDB was allegedly misappropriated by high-level officials of IMDB and their associates". US prosecutors launched lawsuits to recover funds they say fell victim to an "international conspiracy" of "kleptocracy".

The charges state that money from IMDB flowed into bank accounts controlled by Rezak's associates to buy mansions in London and New York and invest in everything from a movie (*The Wolf of Wall Street*) to Van Gogh paintings. Much of the cash was allegedly handled by Jho Low, a Harrow-educated Malaysian playboy and Rezak associate, with \$1bn being diverted into the hands of Low and others via a deal with a UK-Swiss-Saudi company called PetroSaudi, an oil investment firm set up by younger members of the Saudi ruling elite.

This appears to confirm stories published by an investigative website, the Sarawak Report, last year. Whistleblower Xavier Justo, who helped found PetroSaudi but quit the firm in anger in 2011, had leaked thousands of files from PetroSaudi servers to Clare Rewcastle Brown, the British journalist behind the Sarawak Report, in 2014.

PetroSaudi hired Protection Group International, a UK security firm, to undermine her reports. A PGI expert told the Malaysian press the leaked documents and Sarawak stories were "incomplete data, creatively selected and edited to fit a desired narrative". He declared it the work of a "greedy or malicious employee", and likely "plain forgery". The consequences were serious: last year Thai prosecutors jailed Bangkok-based Justo for three years for blackmail on charges brought by PetroSaudi.

PGI International pays former Labour ministers Baroness Symons and Lord Boateng to sit on its "advisory board". The expert who spun the PetroSaudi story is none other than Brian Lord, formerly deputy director for intelligence at GCHQ and now also on PGI's board. *Private Eye* can reveal that Lord Boyce, who until 2003 was chief of the defence staff, is a "senior adviser" to PGI. All of this may give PGI weight, but if the US charges are proved, that weight is on the wrong side in a massive corruption scandal.

Meanwhile PGI has another link to IMDB: Omani billionaire Dr Mohammed Al Barwani, who owns 63 percent of PGI and sits on its board, also owns luxury yacht-building company Oceano. Playboy Low's flamboyant lifestyle includes using – and likely owning – a luxury yacht called *Equanimity*. One of the 50 biggest yachts in the world, *Equanimity* was built and sold by... Al Barwani's Oceano, for a reported \$125m.

So the UK company which tried to undermine the main IMDB whistleblower is part-owned by the man whose firm sold a yacht to Low, the man accused of running off with the IMDB money. PGI declined to respond to the *Eye's* inquiries. IMDB-related investigations and prosecutions are now happening in the US, Switzerland and Singapore. But there is no matching investigation in the UK, even though much of the money flowed through the UK's Royal Bank of Scotland.

INSOLVENCY

Cut-throat Price

MANY of the UK's largest companies, not to mention government itself, rely on the sound financial judgement of our biggest accountancy firm, PricewaterhouseCoopers. A couple of weeks ago in the high court, alas, it was found embarrassingly wanting.

Eye readers will recall the story of Yorkshire businessman Keith Elliott, who lost his profitable Premier Motorauctions business to a pincer movement from bankers Lloyds and bean counters PwC. The latter, he claims, inveigled its way into his business as a supposedly objective adviser and engineered an administration from which it profited in huge fees while its real client, the bank, cashed in on the assets.

The liquidators of Premier Motorauctions also believe that the shareholders, mainly Elliott with 97 percent, were ripped off and are suing PwC and Lloyds for the value of a business that they put at around £50m. They are funding the action the only way possible in such circumstances, through "after the event insurance" from established litigation funders who get paid only if the liquidators win (and evidently think Premier has a good case).

Doing everything it can to prevent the case going ahead, PwC applied for "security for costs", ie several millions of pounds up front, which it knew could never be found by the liquidators or Elliott and would kill the case. To achieve this it had to show that the insurance policies would not pay out, which is where its arguments became highly spurious.



In the judge's words, PwC pointed "to the fact that Elite and Acasta [the insurance companies used] are Gibraltar companies with no credit rating that are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and do not have substantial assets in the UK". The accountants pointed to "a worrying number of Gibraltar insurers who have become insolvent in recent times, and that they should not be at risk of having to go to Gibraltar to enforce any claim against such companies".

Oddly enough, PwC makes a lot of money from insurers in this very part of the world, and when it's touting for business it takes a very different view. "Gibraltar's licensed insurers are able to cover risks both in the United Kingdom and other EU member states," notes PwC on its website, "without the need of a separate licence, as a result of the confirmation by the United Kingdom Government [20 years ago] that the supervisory regime in Gibraltar matched the supervision standards in the United Kingdom".

PwC (along with Elite and Acasta) is also a member of the Gibraltar Insurance Association, which boasts that the Rock "is regarded as one of the better regulated financial centres... in keeping with the requirement of its statute to 'match' UK regulatory standards and practices".

Mr Justice Snowden rejected PwC's case entirely, dismissing its arguments as "extremely weak, if not unfounded", while its views on the insurance policies were "unrealistic". So Premier Motorauctions will have its day in court – to the great annoyance of PwC (motto: "Building relationships, creating value").