

10:23 Homeopathic 'Overdose' Campaign

Consumers in Leeds to take part in nationwide homeopathic 'overdose' protest against Boots' continued endorsement and sale of homeopathic products, despite the company admitting they have no evidence the 'treatments' work.

Leeds-based Consumer rights activists will be taking part in the protests on January 30th, culminating in a mass homeopathic 'overdose' taking place in towns across Britain. The intention is to demonstrate to the public that the homeopathic remedies sold by Boots are nothing but sugar pills, and put pressure on Britain's leading pharmacist to live up to its responsibilities and ensure that the products it sells to customers are genuine.

The protest, organized by Leeds Skeptics [1] as part of the **10:23 Campaign** [2], comes after a Boots representative, Paul Bennett, attracted ridicule from the national press after admitting to a parliamentary select committee last November that Boots sells homeopathic remedies to the public even though they have no evidence the 'treatments' work. The Science and Technology Select Committee are due to release their report on homeopathy around the time of the protest, at the end of January [4].

The **10:23 Campaign** [2] is a national movement headed by the **Merseyside Skeptics Society** [3], which aims to raise awareness of homeopathy, a multi-million pound industry based on a long-discredited 18th century ritual, selling remedies to the public which have no scientific basis and no credible evidence for their efficacy beyond the placebo effect.

While dispensing sugar pills may seem harmless, in reality the endorsement of homeopathic potions by leading health providers can have grave consequences. As well as potentially undermining trust in medicine and medical advice, customers may be misled into believing that they are treating their illness – for example a 2006 Newsnight investigation revealed that homeopaths were advising customers to take ineffective 'preparations' in place of anti-malarial drugs [5]. In extreme cases, such as the 'healing therapist' Russell Jenkins, deaths have occurred [6].

The Boots brand is synonymous with health care in the United Kingdom, and they speak proudly their role as a health care provider and their commitment to deliver exceptional patient care. **Michael Marshall**, a spokesman for the **10:23 Campaign**, said the following: *"We do not expect the nation's leading pharmacist to sell us remedies that do not work. The sale of homeopathic remedies is defended on the basis of allowing customer choice, but choice relies on clear information, and misleading customers by endorsing homeopathic brands restricts their ability to make good health choices."*

Ahead of the protests, an open letter to Boots has been published online (<http://www.1023.org.uk/an-open-letter-to-alliance-boots.php>) and signed by thousands of unhappy customers from across the UK and beyond [7].

Notes for editors follow.

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1. Leeds Skeptics is a non-profit organisation based in Leeds, which aims to promote and develop growth of the sceptical movement in the local community. The group was founded in January 2009 and holds regular meetings in Leeds city centre. <http://www.leedsskeptics.org/>

2. The 10:23 Campaign is a national network of a sceptical groups aiming to raise awareness of the reality of homeopathy - how it can be proven not to work, how it can be shown to be impossible, and why it's important to give patients the right information to allow them to make an informed decision on their healthcare. <http://www.1023.org.uk>

3. Merseyside Skeptics Society is a non-profit organisation which aims to develop and support the sceptical community on Merseyside. The society was founded in February 2009 and holds regular social events in Liverpool City Centre. <http://www.merseysideskeptics.org.uk/>

4. Parliamentary Select Committee: The parliamentary select committee meeting can be found here: <http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Main/Player.aspx?meetingId=5221>

5. Newsnight Investigation: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/5178122.stm>

6. Report on Russell Jenkins' death: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/6664202/Healer-who-refused-traditional-medicine-died-after-treating-infection-with-honey.html>

7. Open Letter to Boots: An open letter/petition to boots can be found here: <http://www.1023.org.uk/an-open-letter-to-alliance-boots.php>

Further information (please contact local representatives first):

Campaign Website: <http://www.1023.org.uk>

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