

Drug marketer agrees to stop claims about ‘miracle’ supplement for seniors



By **RON HURTIBISE**

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Renaissance Health Publishing, a supplement marketer in Boca Raton, agreed to pay \$100,000 and not to make claims about its products that are not supported by clinical research, according to terms of a settlement with the Federal Trade Commission.(Federal Trade Commission/Courtesy)

A Boca Raton drug marketer that generated more than \$2.4 million marketing a “miracle” supplement to seniors has agreed to pay a \$100,000 fine and stop making unproven claims about its products, according to the Federal Trade Commission.

The FTC, in a complaint filed along with a settlement agreement in U.S. District Court in West Palm Beach on April 15, accused Renaissance Health Publishing and its majority owner, James DiGeorgia, of targeting seniors via websites and direct mail.

Operating under the name Renown Health Products, the company distributed ads promising that the drug, called Isoprex, was 100% effective in relieving “the worst cases” of joint pain and inflammation, exhibits filed with the complaint show.

Ads also claimed that Isoprex was safer than over-the-counter drugs such as aspirin and ibuprofen and eliminated pain from neck aches, sore muscles,

lung and respiratory inflammation, back discomfort, stiff fingers, creaky elbows, aching hips and knees, swollen ankles and more.

Other ads promised that Isoprex would rebuild joints and repair damaged cartilage.

But what the company sold for \$49.95 a bottle plus shipping and handling since 2014 was “primarily a combination of various herbs and spices,” the FTC said.

Seniors were urged to order a six-month supply or sign up for automatic shipments “so you don’t run out and have to start all over again.”

The claims violated federal laws prohibiting deceptive practices in commerce, misrepresentations or deceptive omissions, and false advertisement to induce purchase of food or drugs, the FTC’s complaint states.

In addition, the company failed to disclose that people who appeared in ads endorsing the product were either paid for their testimonials or were actually company employees and their relatives, the complaint states.

Aaron Wernick, one of the company’s attorneys, said by email Friday that Renaissance Health Publishing “had possibly made an error in one advertisement for one product years ago” but “wished to avoid litigating with the U.S. government and therefore entered into the settlement.”

Under terms of the settlement and permanent injunction order, the company and DiGeorgia did not admit or deny the allegations, but agreed not to make claims for products without “competent and reliable scientific evidence” to support them.

The company also agreed to pay \$100,000 over 90 days, while the FTC agreed to suspend the balance of a \$3.93 million judgment if the \$100,000 is paid.

The FTC plans to use the money to pay refunds to customers harmed by the alleged misleading advertising, the commission said in a news release.

“When you target older adults with promises that your supplement will relieve pain better than FDA-approved drugs, you’d better have the scientific proof to back that up,” Andrew Smith, director of the FTC’s Bureau of Consumer

Protection, was quoted in the news release as saying. “For help with pain or other health conditions, people should rely on their medical professional, not on an advertisement.”

Renaissance Health Publishing, located at 2424 N. Federal Highway, Suite 401, filed in March 2019 for voluntary reorganization under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy code.

Renaissance remains in business and continues to market Isoprex and other products on its Renown Health Products website.

Currently, a product information page for “the new and improved Isoprex” touts it as “the overlooked miracle food that supports healthy joints.”

While the page does not claim that Isoprex eliminates pain, it does state that the product was the subject of eight clinical research studies. One study found that after 10 days of taking the product, “patients were already getting relief” and by the study’s end “felt significant or moderate joint improvement,” the web page states.

The bankruptcy court has approved sale of the company’s assets to Golden Developing Solutions Inc. for \$285,000, Wernick said. He added that the sale will close shortly, and the \$100,000 owed to the FTC will be paid from the proceeds.

DiGeorgia has operated more than 20 Boca Raton-based companies over the past four decades, according to Sunbiz.org, the state’s online registration database for corporations. Most specialized in stock trading advice, rare coins and precious metals.

Ron Hurtibise

South Florida Sun Sentinel

Ron Hurtibise is a business reporter for the South Florida Sun Sentinel. A Florida resident since 1977, he covers property and health insurance, tourism, the automotive industry, and consumer topics. He is a Florida State University graduate and a former investigative reporter at the Daytona Beach News-Journal. You can call him at 954-356-4071.