

Consumers in Hungary stage homeopathic 'overdose'

Consumer rights activists across Hungary have today announced their intention to take a mass homeopathic 'overdose' next month, as part of a major global protest against the alternative remedies.

Protestors in Budapest, Szeged and Székesfehérvár will swallow entire bottles of homeopathic pills on February 5th 2011, in a bid to raise public awareness of the fact that homeopathic 'remedies' are ineffective - putting pressure on pharmacists and healthcare providers to ensure that products sold as medical treatments actually work.

Gabor Hrasko, spokesman for the group, said: *“There are several serious problems around homeopathy. People believe that this is a kind of herbal medicine, though most of these remedies are so much diluted that they do not contain any materials except lactose. Pharmacists are aware of the fact that these remedies are registered by the National Institute of Pharmacy^[1] and this gives them the false feeling that there is scientific proof about their effectiveness. Most of them do not realize – and are quite much embarrassed when informed – that the registration is done by a simplified process specially designed for homeopathy where no clinical evidence should be provided at all. These products must not be labeled and sold as remedies.”*

The demonstration is being organized by the Hungarian Skeptic Society^[2] as part of the 10:23 Campaign^[3] - a global protest against the homeopathic remedies originating in the United Kingdom. Similar events will be taking place in dozens of countries around the world, with protests announced in Germany, Hungary, Australia and Canada.

Michael Marshall, coordinator of the international campaign, said:

“We intend to show that there is a growing feeling around the world that enough time and money has been wasted on homeopathic remedies. In the two hundred years these treatments have existed, there has never been anything to suggest they work – and because they're nothing but sugar and water, they couldn't possibly do the things homeopaths claim they can do. Tens of billions of pounds are spent every year around the world on these ineffective remedies, and when told what they really are, and how they're made, most people are shocked these useless treatments are still able to be sold to an unsuspecting public.”

The 10:23 Campaign launched a year ago in the UK, with almost 400 protestors taking part in 'overdose' events across the country following an admission by Britain's leading pharmacy that the pills are only sold because consumers will buy them, not because they are effective^[4]. The campaign is named after 'Avogadro's Number'^[5] – a scientific constant which can be used to show homeopathic potions contain no active ingredients.

Though some would argue dispensing sugar pills may seem harmless, the endorsement of homeopathic potions by pharmacists and healthcare providers has grave consequences. As well as undermining public trust in medicine and medical advice, patients with serious conditions can avoid seeking medical attention in the belief that homeopathy can treat their condition. An investigation by the BBC in January 2011 revealed that homeopaths were willing to give travelers ineffective homeopathic 'preparations' to use in place of real anti-malarial drugs^[6], as well as ineffective homeopathic alternatives to vaccinations^[7].

The 10:23 Campaign is organizing protests in more than twenty three cities across ten counties on February 5th, 2011.

Notes for editors:

- [1] National Institute of Pharmacy (Országos Gyógyszerészeti Intézet) http://www.ogyi.hu/main_page/
- [2] Hungarian Skeptic Society (Szkeptikus Társaság) <http://skeptics.hu/>
- [3] The 10:23 Campaign is a network of skeptical groups which aims to raise awareness of the reality of homeopathy – how we know it doesn't work and why it is important that patients should be given the right information to allow them to make an informed decision about their health. <http://www.1023.org.uk/>, <http://1023.hu/>, <http://www.facebook.com/1023.hu>
- [4] <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1230925/Boots-sells-homeopathic-remedies-theyre-popular-work.html>
- [5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avogadro_constant
- [6] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/9341713.stm>
- [7] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-11280578>

Local project manager: András Pintér / pinter.andras@szkeptikus.hu / +36 70 2534817

Local media contact: Gabor Hrasko / hrasko.gabor@szkeptikus.hu / +36 30 9332076

International contact: Michael Marshall / contact@1023.org.uk / +44 7841 134 309