November 2012:
How to Spot Health Fraud

Hello Everyone,

The air is crisp and the leaves are changed - Fall is in full swing! This is a wonderful season to enjoy with family and friends, whether you take a long weekend to enjoy the fresh fall scenery, or if you enjoy your time at home. This month’s feature gives helpful pointers on how to spot health fraud - a growingly costly problem for many families across the United States.

Your Partners at The Wellness Corporation

Recognizing Health Fraud:
Money Well-Spent versus Scams & Quackery

You have probably seen ads promoting health breakthroughs and miracle cures - statements claiming that a certain treatment or supplement can cure the most debilitating of diseases or provide a much better quality of life. The appeal of these promises is easy to understand. As a consumer, it is important to remember:

If it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is.

What is Health Fraud?
Health fraud is also known as health scams or quackery. It involves the selling and marketing of drugs, devices, foods or cosmetics that have not been proven effective. The problem is serious. Health scams are costly, both financially and physically. The use of untested remedies can be dangerous – interfering with prescription medications or keeping people from seeking the medical attention they need. Sadly, older people are often the targets of these scams. Most health fraud victims in the United States are older than 65.

False Hopes
Why do so many people fall for these scams? Living with a chronic condition is hard. Health fraud preys on those who are frightened or in pain. These unproven treatments promise false hope to those looking for relief, offering cures that seem painless or quick. At best, these remedies simply don’t work. At worst, they can be dangerous.

Learn More
For additional information on how to recognize and prevent health fraud, please visit:

Federal Trade Commission
www.ftc.gov

Food & Drug Administration
www.fda.gov
Common Health Scams
Health fraud typically targets conditions or diseases that have no cure, such as arthritis and diabetes. Some of the most common health scams include:

Anti-Aging Medications. Despite claims about remedies that lead to endless youth, there are no treatments that have been proven to slow or reverse the aging process. So far, science has found that healthy lifestyle choices such as a healthy diet, regular exercise and not smoking offer the best chances of aging well.

Arthritis Treatments. You have probably seen or heard claims that so-called treatments with copper bracelets, magnets, radiation, chemicals or other products can cure arthritis. This is highly unlikely, as there is no cure for most forms of arthritis. Rest, exercise, heat and some drugs help many people control arthritis symptoms. If you are thinking about any new treatment, talk with your doctor first.

Cancer Cures. Scammers often promote one-size-fits-all treatments with no proven value. For example, you may see an ad claiming that a diet dangerously low in protein or stating that drugs such as laetrile will cure the disease. In reality, there is no one treatment that can cure all types of cancer. This type of scam is particularly dangerous. By using unproven treatments, people battling cancer may lose valuable time and the chance to benefit from a proven, effective treatment.

Dietary Supplements. Most dietary supplements are not federally regulated, meaning they are not tested or reviewed by the government before they are put on the market. While some vitamins and supplements can be helpful when approved by your health care provider, others may be harmful for people with certain medical conditions, or for those who take certain medications. Talk with your doctor before starting any supplement.

Common Health Scams
By becoming an educated consumer, you can protect yourself from health fraud. There are a few telltale signs that an ad is probably a health scam. Look for red flags in promotional material or ads that:

- Promise a painless or quick cure
- Claim that the product is made from a special, secret or ancient formula or ingredient
- Offers products and services only by mail or from one organization
- Claim to cure a wide range of ailments
- Claim to cure a disease that has not yet been cured by medical science (e.g. arthritis or diabetes)
- Promise a no-risk, money-back guarantee
- Offer special promotions such as a “free” gift or greater amounts of the product
- Ask for advance payment and claim that there is a limited supply of the product