



August 27, 2004

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HealthScene Special Report

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Sue Gilliatt

Herbal Nightmare: Part One

Alternative medicine is a popular way to treat just about any ailment. Each year, billions are spent in the United States on alternative treatments. News 8 has a warning for anyone who's ever considered trying one.

Many herbal treatments are not regulated or tested by the FDA. While most of them are benign, News 8 uncovered one that is dangerous. If you've ever considered treating yourself with a so-called natural product, you need to read this report.

From a distance it's difficult to tell what could be wrong with 49-year-old nurse, Sue Gilliatt. Two years ago sue purchased a product that would change her face, for the rest of her life.

In the spring of 2001, Gilliatt noticed a small spot on her nose. She worried it might be skin cancer. Her personal physician recommended she see a dermatologist. While she waited for that appointment, she turned to the Internet. "I looked on the internet for conventional and non conventional treatments," she said.

Gilliatt found a website with products that treated skin cancer: Alpha Omega Labs. Its banner reads, "the triumph of medical science over politics and greed."

"It said it would destroy cancerous tissue and that if it got on healthy tissue that it would cause some redness, but wouldn't harm the healthy tissue," she said.

Gilliatt ordered Cansema salve for \$49. She applied the cream to the lesion and surrounding tissue and put on a clear bandage. "Everywhere the salve had touched, the skin reacted. I thought it wouldn't harm healthy tissue, so I covered a large area and went to bed," she said. When she woke up the next morning and washed it off, she saw a large scab. Gilliatt said she didn't know what to think, since she was under the impression it wouldn't harm healthy tissue.

A couple of days after applying the Cansema salve, Gilliatt applied another product she had purchased over the Internet from another website, an herb

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called bloodroot. While it didn't sting or burn like the Cansema salve had, she did feel some reactions, noticing her blood pressure was up and that she felt nauseated.

By the time she got to the dermatologist, her nose had been burned away. Cartilage protruded from the place that had been her nose. By that time, Gilliatt says she knew she was in serious trouble.

Since then, she has undergone six operations to reconstruct her nose.

Her story raises a lot of questions: What was in the products she used that would burn her tissue? Who are the people behind the websites? Is it still possible to purchase Cansema salve and bloodroot paste?

Herbal Nightmare: Part Two

It's not often that someone who's had a horrible accident comes forward to tell their story. That's what Sue Gilliatt is doing, after purchasing a toxic salve that burned off her nose. News 8 investigated who is selling the toxic product and what is actually in it.

Gilliatt took matters into her own hands when she noticed a spot on her nose back in 2001. She went on line, while waiting for a dermatologists' appointment, and purchased two herbal products: Cansema salve and bloodroot paste and applied them to the spot, with disastrous results.

The skin on her nose was burned off. All that was left was an open wound and bone and cartilage. So far, she's been through six operations to reconstruct her nose.

"I had to have bone removed from my sternum and cartilage from my rib and also tissue for my nose came from my forehead," she said.

Gilliatt has filed suit against Alpha Omega Labs and Appalachian herbal remedies.

The first thing Gilliatt had to know was what was in those products. Her attorney, John Muller, had the Cansema salve and bloodroot paste sent to a Texas lab for analysis. What they found was shocking.

The Armstrong forensic lab report revealed the Cansema salve had a high level of zinc chloride - acidic enough to burn skin. In the bloodroot paste, they also found a high level of zinc chloride, considered very potent and toxic to cell structures.

Gilliatt believes the makers of the products might have confused zinc chloride with zinc oxide. "To a layperson, when you see zinc chloride you're going to think zinc oxide for baby rash. Zinc chloride is made by pouring hydrochloric acid over zinc. It's an acid product," she said.

Hydrochloric acid is also found in another product, H30, sold by Alpha Omega Labs. It was used on a Texas woman after she had a hysterectomy. She claims she nearly died.

So who is behind Alpha Omega Labs? The Food and Drug Administration decided to find out. They raided the headquarters in Lake Charles, Louisiana and discovered it was run by Greg Caton, a convicted felon.



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FDA agents discovered a cache of weapons on Caton's property, so he was jailed on charges of violating terms of his parole. The Alpha Omega website is shut down.

News 8 tried to reach Greg Caton, but his attorney would make no comment about Sue Gilliatt or Alpha Omega Labs. Monte Ray, the attorney for the man who sold the bloodroot paste, says his client, Reverend Dan Raber, is not selling the bloodroot paste anymore. Ray also said Reverend Raber intends to apply the bloodroot to his arm during the upcoming trial and show that it is safe.

In the meantime, Gilliatt's lawsuit against both Reverend Raber and Greg Caton is moving forward. John Muller, her attorney, says it's been a painful lesson.

"I think you have to be careful about the Internet. It's a great big world and you don't really know who you're dealing with, certainly you don't know if they have your interest at heart," he said. Gilliatt says that while she believes alternative treatments should be available, she says to exercise caution.

Some of the money from Alpha Omega Labs may be in numbered accounts in the Bahamas. Gilliatt and her attorney are going forward with their lawsuit.

Unfortunately, it is still possible to buy those products on other websites. If you want some tips on how to buy products over the internet safely, [click here](#).

[Click Here for Tips from the FDA Before You Buy!](#)



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