Identifying and Avoiding Lupus Scams

by BARBARA LEECH

Don't Fall Victim to Lupus Scams

There is a saying that goes, “If it seems too good to be true, it probably is.” As a lupus warrior, you are a prime target for those who sell “miracle” remedies that allegedly have cured several cases of lupus, Raynaud’s syndrome, or a myriad of other health issues that come along with an autoimmune disease.

Scammers target your vulnerability, your desperation for a cure and a normal life, and they give you examples that tempt you into believing.

I too have tried a couple of these so-called cures. To be honest, some provided a bit of relief of some lupus symptoms initially (perhaps placebo effect?) only to completely fail me a few weeks later. Others did nothing and cost me plenty.

You have probably seen many ads online, which are nothing but less-than-cleverly disguised sales pitches crafted by those who market health-related products. Some of these miracle supplements claim to stop swelling and pain and even make you lose weight, while others claim they have cured those who have lupus and other life-altering ailments.

I remain open to the idea that there are probably supplements and things I can try that may ease lupus symptoms and assist my body, but I am highly skeptical that a “cure” has been discovered and somehow only a few people are lucky enough to have it work for them.

Seeking the Truth

I was a journalist for many years. When you are in college studying for this degree, something inside of you clicks and you decide to commit to uncovering the truth. You are angered by deception, especially if done for profit and disguised as “helpful information” for those who are suffering.

So, I seek truth — the two sides to every story and most important, the motivation behind some so-called testimonials and claims. Sadly, the motivation of many people is money.

So where do the scammers come from? How do they find you? There are a few ways.

Support Group Scammers

If you belong to a lupus support group, they sometimes will quietly join the group. They will post comments saying their aunt, mother, cousin, (insert any connection here) has lupus and they just wanted to share that she had miraculous results from taking supplement X — and of course they personally can sell you some.

Or they join lupus groups then privately message you that they are so sorry for your suffering (they read your

post) but they have a cure that worked for them and they are willing to tell you how.

The Well-Meaning Friend/Family Member

Many of us with lupus have well-meaning friends and family, or even people we just met, who know of someone or something that has located a “cure” for what ails us. They will suggest whatever they have read in some natural health magazine.

Or perhaps they have been roped into selling those magic supplements or miracle shakes that will change your health and make you lose 50 pounds — if you also stop eating solid food. They will approach you to try it because it seems to have worked miracles according to the company’s testimonial page — so many people who have been cured!

These friends and family may actually believe this supplement will cure you. So be kind, but be smart about what you buy into. The motivation here is still selling you something.

In fact, they are probably being fed miracle testimonials stories by their “upline” trainers, so they recruit you into the fold. That is how it works in these companies.

Trying Remedies and Treatments While Avoiding Lupus Scams

This all being said, I believe that if it seems like a safe thing to try, does not require a lot of money or signing up for automatic shipments, and it won’t interact with my medications, trying something new has merit.

And there are some things that everyday people (with nothing to gain) will share with you because they truly know it worked for them. Some of these things can ease lupus symptoms and make life easier.

If you are seeking a miracle, you are probably going to be scammed. If you are seeking a remedy that may help you cope better, and are being realistic about it, you may get lucky and find one.

Investigate Before You Buy

The fact is there is a myriad of false claims out there, a few myths, old wives’ tales, and even scams, that simply prey upon our desperation for a cure. So, while you need to continue to try and help yourself and find methods (foods, diets, alternative remedies) to cope and hopefully improve how you feel, there are some tactics to watch out for:

- **Results that seem too good to be true.** If they claim to be a cure or that those why try it have gone off their medications, beware. These claims are often backed by “real people” testimonials, but in most cases they have been compensated to share those claims or they themselves sell the product.
- **Language and research results that are hard to understand or biased.** If you see claims of extensive research with amazing scientific results to prove it, do an online search. If you can’t find any information from a legitimate source, not from the company itself, the findings should be questioned.
- **Automatic shipments.** Autoship means your credit card is billed and you will continue to be sent products. If you decide the product is not really working, costs more than you thought, or you use less than what they are sending you, you may get billed several times before you can stop the shipments.

I believe the best advice is for you to be cautious. Never suddenly stop your medications because some supplement salesperson (they will tell you they are not in sales, by the way) tells you others have taken their pills or shakes and were cured.

Investigate the company and its claims. Be skeptical and think any purchases you make through. Speak to your doctor about how to safely try a new “remedy” and never jeopardize your health while seeking to improve it.