

Quack, quack: When consumer protection is all noise and no action

On paper the South African legal system provides ample protection for consumers regarding false claims about so-called health products. But in reality, the truth is very different.

The much lauded Consumer Protection Act prohibits misleading and/or deceptive statements about a product, whether it's on the packaging, in the advertising or even made in person (think celebrity endorsements). However, consumers are generally sent from pillar to post with complaints. They're either referred to the Advertising Standards Authority, the Medicines Control Council or the Directorate: Food Control of the Department of Health, all of which appear to do little to protect the consumer from quackery and pseudoscientific marketing claims, says Janusz Luterek, legal specialist on food science & technology, Hahn & Hahn Attorneys.

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