Shay O'Neill

Peer Review & Research Integrity Manager

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 Re: Marty Hinz, M.D.

Dear Sir:

I have acquired more information about Dr. Hinz and would like to expand my complaint. For your convenience, I have combined the new information with what I previously sent to you.

**Background History**

Since 1999, Dr. Hinz has built a network of companies around unsubstantiated claims that dozens of diseases are caused by neurotransmitter deficiencies or imbalances and that oral doses amino acids and other supplements are effective treatments. The companies include NeuroResearch, NeuroResearch Clinics, DBS Labs, West Duluth Distribution Company (doing business as CHK Nutrition), the Morgan Park Clinic, and Parkinson Clinics.com.

In the beginning, NeuroResearch, sold the dietary supplements and Hinz built a network of affiliated clinics, while DBS Labs did neurotransmitter-related testing. Hinz also recruited practitioners through seminars about his ideas and still does so. In 2005, the FDA warned to Hinz and NeuroResearch that they were making illegal supplement claims. In response, CHK Nutrition was established to sell the supplements with Hinz’s daughter as the chief operating officer.

In 2011, following FDA inspections, the FDA concluded that the coordination of the companies perpetuated illegal product claims. The FDA then went to court and obtained a a permanent injunction under which Hinz, his daughter, and their companies were required to (a) remove from their product labels, labeling, promotional material, websites, and other media all representations that their products or the ingredient combinations in their products cure, mitigate, treat, or prevent disease, (b) notify all previous customers that the products could not be sold for such purposes.

Since that time, NeuroResearch (still owned by Hinz) has represented itself as an educational company that gives continuing education seminars, Hinz has assumed ownership of DBS Labs, his daughter has become owner of CHK Nutrition, and his wife has been a shareholder in Duluth Distribution.

I believe that Hinz’s seminars teach doctors how to order lab tests from his lab. Some lab reports have been accompanied by a document that mentions the consultations. Lab catalogs have mentioned the research and promoted the seminars. Hinz also uses the names NeuroResearch Clinics and Morgan Park Clinic, which I think describes his network of clinics operated by the doctors who attend his seminars. Hinz has told me that he does 20 to 25 consultations a month through the Internet.

Hinz’s Parkinson.com Web site invites prospective patients to inquire about treatment. Someone who did so sent me the attached brochure, which claims that standard medical treatment is associated with 29 nutritional deficiencies and is linked to a 390% increase in the Parkinson’s disease death rates since 1976. Hinz attributes the increase to the use of carbidopa, but the far-more-likely cause is increased reporting of the disease due to increased awareness. People who bought into the Hinz’s protocol have told me that they did so because they were afraid that carbidopa would shorted their life. As far as I can tell, the fear was generated by Hinz’s paper, The Parkinson’s disease death rate: carbidopa and vitamin B6 (*Clinical Pharmacology: Advances and Applications* 2014:6 161–169).

My detailed report about Hinz and his network is posted at <http://www.quackwatch.org/11Ind/hinz.html>

**Inadequate Conflict-of Interest Disclosures**

My original complaint to Dove Press expressed the following concerns about conflict of interest disclosures:

* Three of the papers disclosed no conflicts of interest: #2, #8, and #15
* Papers #3, #4, #5, #6, #9, and #16 disclose DBS but fail to disclose the other three entities.
* Papers #10, #12, #13, and #14 disclose NeuroResearch Clinics but fail to disclose the other entities.

Since that time, I have found “Corrigenda” for #9, #15, and #22. (Please see attached COI document for details.) Corrigendum #22, which is the most complete, states:

On page 774, Disclosure section, “MH discloses his relationship with DBS Laboratory services and NeuroResearch Clinics, Inc. The other authors report no conflicts of interest in this work” should have been “MH discloses his relationship with DBS Laboratory services and NeuroResearch Clinics, Inc. CHK Nutrition is a subsidiary of West Duluth Distribution Co. The CEO of this company is Amy M. Gunther-Hinz and the Registered Agent is Thais M Hinz. These persons are the daughter and the wife of Dr Marty Hinz. Thais Hinz is also a shareholder of West Duluth Distribution Co. The other authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

By making this disclosure, Hinz admits that all of the other papers fall short. **That means that your investigation must conclude that all of his other disclosure statements were inadequate**. But the problem is more serious than that.

I believe that conflict-of-interest statements should enable readers to understand the nature of financial associations between the authors and the subject matter of their writings. It is not enough to simply naming companies without indicating how they relate to the subject matter of the articles. In addition to being absent or incomplete, none of the 21 papers make clear *how* the authors’ conflicts of interest are structured. Based on what I now know, you should, at minimum, require two sets of revised statements to reflect Hinz’s situation before and after the 2011 FDA injunction.

The papers published June 2011 should disclose the following:

* Marty Hinz owns NeuroResearch Clinics, which markets continuing medical education courses that promote “Hinz protocols” that use dietary supplements intended to influence the balance of neurotransmitters in the brain. Hinz also has a financial interest in the West Duluth Distribution Company, doing business as CHK Nutrition, which supplies the supplements used for Hinz’s protocols. Hinz also owns DBS Labs, which does testing needed to implement Hinz’s protocols. Hinz also does virtual consultations for patients undergoing treatment at the clinics affiliated with NeuroResearch.
* Thomas Uncini is the medical director of DBS Labs.
* Alvin Stein, M.D., operates a clinic that utilizes the Hinz protocol and derives income from patient fees and the sale of supplements marketed by CHK Nutrition. He has also been an instructor for some of NeuroResearch’s educational programs.

The papers published after June 2011 injunction should state:

* Marty Hinz is the owner of NeuroResearch Clinics, which markets continuing medical education courses that promote “Hinz protocols” that use dietary supplements intended to influence the balance of neurotransmitters in the brain.
* Hinz owns DBS Labs, which does testing that is needed to implement Hinz’s protocols.
* Until June 2011, Hinz also had a financial interest the West Duluth Distribution Company, doing business as CHK Nutrition, which supplies the supplements used for Hinz’s protocols. Hinz’s daughter, Amy M. Gunther-Hinz, is CEO of the West Duluth Distribution Company; and Hinz’s wife, Thais M. Hinz, is the registered agent and a shareholder.
* Hinz does virtual consultations for patients undergoing treatment at the clinics affiliated with NeuroResearch.
* Thomas Uncini is the medical director of DBS Labs.
* Drs. Alvin Stein, Ted Cole, Beth M. McDougall, and Mark Westaway operate clinics that utilize the Hinz protocol and derive income from patient fees and the sale of supplements marketed by CHK Nutrition. They have also been instructors for some of NeuroResearch’s educational programs.

**Quality of the Reports**

I also have concerns about the quality of the papers. Some of them are repetitive. Some say that the data in the paper came from a database that Hinz accessed, but they don’t say how the data got into it. Nor do they say what criteria were used to create the data or what criteria were used to extract it. No patient population is described. No randomization is described. A few papers say that patients improved, but no supporting data are presented.

I understand that in 2013, the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA terminated Dove's membership for at least one year after concluding that there had been "a lack of sufficient rigour in editorial processes and that for Dove . . . the issues may extend wider than the single affected journal." Fifteen of Hinz’s papers were approved for publication under the old system and all but one of the rest were approved during the period of suspension. The omissions in papers #7 (no methodology described) and #19 (faulty conclusion) are so basic and so serious that they should never have passed peer review and should either be modified or retracted. I am skeptical of others but do not know enough about biochemistry to evaluate them. If what I say concerns you, I hope you will have suitable experts review the others to see whether they should be modified or retracted.

**Commercial Use of the Papers**

I notice that Dove Press has the following policy about commercial use:

Author(s) employed, for gain or otherwise, or associated or allied to any commercial institution (including but not limited to the list of examples above) **shall NOT** reproduce, distribute, link or post their DMP published paper on their company website in any manner that is primarily intended for or directed toward commercial advantage or monetary compensation without first obtaining the prior written permission of DMP. DMP reserves all rights to institute legal proceedings against the author(s) and/or their institution in such circumstances.

Hinz and his companies are using these papers as sales tools. I am particularly concerned about #19 “The Parkinson’s disease death rate: carbidopa and vitamin B6,” which is being used to frighten patients away from standard treatment and toward treatment by Hinz’s practitioner network. If Hinz has Dove Press’s permission to use the papers commercially, I hope that you will review what he is doing and whether he should be permitted to continue doing it.

In the early 1990s, the editors of the *New England Journal of Medicine* became concerned that a 1990 preliminary report on the use of growth hormone by elderly person was being used to drive sales of growth hormone and growth hormone precursors. In 1993, the editor-in-chief wrote about this and set up their Web site so that future downloads of the article would be accompanied by his editorial warning. (See <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp030021>) It might be appropriate for Dove to do something like this with Hinz article #19.

**Suggestions for Dove**

Here is a handy summary of what I would like to see you do.

1. It is obvious that Dr. Hinz did not make adequate conflict-of-interest disclosures. I hope that, within the near future, you will see to it that complete information is supplied. At the very least, every one of the published papers should have the disclosure section modified *within the paper*. Simply issuing separate linked “Corrigenda” is not enough, because most people who look at the papers as they are now will never see them.
2. In view of the number of concealments, the length of time they have gone unchallenged, and the fact that Dr. Hinz (partially) corrected three of 21 papers without correcting the others, I believe it would be appropriate for Dove to publish a statement about the mass-correction.
3. I believe that paper #19 should be retracted because it contains an illogical attack on carbidopa that has the potential to cause great public harm. If Dr. Hinz wants to republish the paper, it should undergo stringent peer review by experts in neurology.

Thank you for considering my complaint.

 Sincerely,

 Stephen Barrett, M.D.