

# Hairy Diagnosis

Early in 2003 I received a very impressive flyer from a company, Naturopathic Services, PO Box 3920 Robina QLD 4230. It offered allergy testing by either probing [non-invasively] an acupuncture point on the thumb or by my simply sending a sample of hair (plus money).

They claimed to use “modern electronic equipment” to test 260 substances, both generic and proprietary and that “medications will not affect this test.” The brochure explicitly stated that “Colours and perms do not affect the testing”, and that “Hair testing is just as accurate as testing on an acupuncture point”. This last claim I would, perhaps, agree with.

My theatre sister at the hospital occasionally has her hair streaked, so I asked her to provide two small, different coloured, hair samples, which she wrapped in plastic wrap as per the instructions, and which I did not in any way directly handle myself.

I then sent off two copies of the application form for testing of each of these two samples, one in my name at my address, and one in her name at her address, and in each case simply mentioned that the owner of the hair had hay fever.

We each received the appropriate (and radically different) test results, which are shown below. Although the two samples (albeit of different colours) were from the head of the same person, it would appear that only one substance, No 72 — carrot — was common to the two reports.

The nursing sister in question is in fact not allergic to carrots, nor indeed to anything else mentioned in either of the reports. She considers herself very allergic to most cheeses, but the three types of cheese in the report passed with flying colours. She was, however, devastated to realise that she was allergic to Lindt chocolate!

While the “test” results were totally different, the advice contained in the covering letters was almost identical, suggesting mainly avoidance of the highlighted items, and that the naturopath be contacted after 4 weeks. The one difference between the two letters was, however, startling. The form that was returned to me carried the extra advice that I check the Yellow Pages for a Naturopath who specialises in pregnancy!

This little exercise cost me \$190, since I was not able to take advantage of their “Start of the Year Special” offer in time, but I believe it would be \$190 well spent if this could be brought to the attention of the appropriate authorities in Queensland, in order to expunge a mail order scam like this. Both the sister and I would be happy to provide statutory declarations as to the veracity of the details which I have provided in this article.

(Test Results, abstracted from the forms received, are listed in the table. Column A contains those sent to the sister and Column B those sent to the doctor.)

A	B
	<b>Fruit</b>
Kiwifruit	Pineapple
Lychee	Dates
	<b>Condiments</b>
Chicken stock (Magi)	MSG (621)
Mixed herbs	Tomato sauce (Fount'n)
	Tomato paste (Leggos)
	BBQ sauce (Eta)
	Worc. sauce
	Soy sauce
	Horseradish sauce
	Gravox
	Vegetite
	Promite
	Beef stock (Magi)
	<b>Vegetables</b>
Carrots	Carrots
	<b>Nuts</b>
Pistachio	Hazel
	<b>Meats/Fats</b>
Canola oil	Olive oil
	<b>Grains/Cereals</b>
Kidney beans	White rice
Baked beans (Heinz)	Wheat bran
	<b>Dairy Foods</b>
Margarine (Flora)	Nuttalex Margarine
Vitasoy	Aussie soy
Ice cream (Pauls vanil)	
	<b>Sugars</b>
Honey	
Carob	
Chololate (Lindt)	
	<b>Drinks</b>
Beer	Port
Tea	Coffee
Fanta (Orange)	Green tea
	<b>Chemicals</b>
Softly fabric softener	Cold Power (blue)
	<b>Hair/Fibres</b>
Silk	
	<b>Food Colours</b>
	Yellow
	<b>Others</b>
	Cigarette smoke

The author of the above piece is Dr Cholm Williams, a prominent Sydney-based plastic surgeon, who will be guest speaker at the next **NSW Skeptics Dinner Meeting at the Chatswood Club on July 5.**

Full details will be contained in the insert in this issue (NSW subscribers only).

The title of his talk will be:

## The Skeptical Plastic Surgeon: Ponce de Leon meets P T Barnum

It will cover historical and current aspects of appearance manipulation, and the way charlatanry has always been an integral part of the scene.