

EDITOR'S NOTE

Medical myths

You may have got this email warning about "drinking leftover mineral water in plastic bottle can cause cancer". The origins of this and other similar health warnings have been debunked in several websites devoted to hoaxes and quackery that are so prevalent nowadays. Check these out if you are interested:

<http://www.snopes.com/>

<http://urbanlegendsonline.com/>

<http://www.skeptic.com/>

During patient care, most doctors usually try their best to provide the most accurate information to their patients. However, if we are not current with the latest medical knowledge, we may fall into the trap of passing on falsehoods. Here are a few:

FACT: Antioxidants DO NOT prevent cancer

Bardia A, Tleyjeh IM, Cerhan JR, *et al.* Efficacy of antioxidant supplementation in reducing primary cancer incidence and mortality: systematic review and meta-analysis. *Mayo Clin Proc.* 2008;83(1):23-34. <http://www.mayoclinicproceedings.com/content/83/1/23.full.pdf>

FACT: Fish oils DO NOT prevent heart attacks

Hooper L, Thompson RL, Harrison RA, *et al.* Risks and benefits of omega 3 fats for mortality, cardiovascular disease, and cancer: systematic review. *BMJ.* 2006;332(7544):752-60. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1420708/pdf/bmj33200752.pdf>

FACT: Mild high blood pressure DOES NOT cause headache

Kruszewski P, Bieniaszewski L, Neubauer J, Krupa-Wojciechowska B. Headache in patients with mild to moderate hypertension is generally not associated with simultaneous blood pressure elevation. *J Hypertens.* 2000;18(4):437-44

FACT: Ginkgo DOES NOT prevent dementia

Snitz BE, O'Meara ES, Carlson MC, *et al.* Ginkgo biloba for preventing cognitive decline in older adults: a randomized trial. *JAMA.* 2009;302(24):2663-70. <http://jama.ama-assn.org/content/302/24/2663.full.pdf>

The *Malaysian Family Physician* is happy to publish critiques of possible medical myths that are currently in vogue. Do back up your dissenting view with facts. This kind of short pieces may come in the form of evidence-based commentary.

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