

## The GVH warns about scam websites

**16 April 2021, Budapest – The Hungarian Competition Authority (GVH) has recently been receiving more and more consumer signals about objectionable websites advertising various healthcare products.**

The websites which have caught the attention of the GVH first outline some health issue, which could generally result in reduced quality of life, then offer a quick, easy, and last but not least discounted solution recommended by professors and its effectiveness supported by positive consumer feedback.

Consumers suffering from health issues may be especially interested in and receptive to new solutions and possible therapeutic procedures, especially if these are offered to them at a price that appears to be reasonable and with the recommendations of experts, occasionally in a format imitating an article or ‘interview’ with the doctor or expert who is claimed to have invented the method.

The GVH would like to draw the attention of the consumers to the importance of treating such websites with special caution since the commercial practices used may be considered unfair for several reasons. It should definitely raise suspicion if

- the name of the product is only visible after scrolling down, around the middle of the content presented on the website;
- no company name is displayed anywhere on the website, thus making it impossible to know from whom the consumer is ordering and the ‘Contact us’ page typically only contains a phone number;
- the product category is not specified, thus failing to disclose whether the promoted product is a dietary supplement, medical device, or cosmetic product;
- the reader is addressed by a person calling themselves a doctor and the style of the content is personal: the ‘doctor’ often includes their own experiences in the text (e.g. how the product helped their old mother with her health problems);
- the website claims that the product has a variety of positive effects and often promises that the symptoms will go away immediately, while at the same time failing to provide or reference any concrete evidence;
- the website attempts to reinforce the trust of the consumers in the product by listing the names of various institutions allegedly engaged in the treatment of joint disease; however, these institutions may not even exist;
- the reviews displayed unanimously praise the positive effects of the product; such reviews may not have been written by actual consumers or were unilaterally moderated to filter out any negative feedback;
- the website encourages customers to join a so-called ‘discount club’, promising lower prices for club members;
- some form of a countdown is used to display the number of available products (e.g. ‘Order today and save HUF 13,000. The offer only applies to the first 200 orders’).
- the general terms and conditions available on the website do not use correct Hungarian grammar and spelling, they are not available in Hungarian or not available on the website at all.

If you come across a website matching the above description, we recommend taking the following steps:

- Search the internet for the names, institutions, and images presented on the website. This quickly makes it apparent if the images show people who are not actual experts.
- Search the internet for the name of the product and read reviews on actual forums. This makes it possible to quickly find out whether the offer is reliable or a waste of money.
- Ask actual experts about the product. It is likely that they have never heard about the product that is being advertised.
- Verify the identity of the person you would be able to enforce your consumer rights against if you decided to order.
- If the person on the other end of the line cannot tell you the name of the distributor and the product category or cannot answer your questions about the ways you can enforce your consumer rights, do not order the product.
- Always have reservations when it comes to messages implying urgency or the limited availability of the product.
- Think carefully about your purchasing decision and do not order the product if you have doubts.

GVH Press Office