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## Amazon attacked for ‘selling illegal cancer remedies on behalf of hucksters’



• Among the items listed as 'cancer treatments' are apricot kernels Rosemary Calvert/Getty Images

[Kat Lay](#)

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Amazon has been criticised for hosting sales of products that make “grotesque” claims that they can cure or treat cancer.

Products available through the online retailer at Amazon.co.uk, sold by third parties, included a listing for organic Indian Madder powder, sold as a “blood purifier”, another

for dried crocodile blood and another for apricot kernels. They claim to “relieve cancer”, “destroy tumors [sic]” or “give cancer cells a hard time”.

None has any scientific evidence to back up the claims, meaning that they fall foul of medicine regulations as well as the Cancer Act 1939, which bans advertisements of any would-be cancer treatment.

David Colquhoun, Professor of Pharmacology at University College London, said: “The claims are quite grotesque. The real danger is that people will believe the hucksters and take only things like these.”

The online store took down the listings late last week after *The Times* contacted the [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency](#) (MHRA), despite being alerted on March 15 about the misleading adverts.

The product page for Indian Madder, sold by Ayur Organics and Herbs UK, claimed that it would help to “destroy tumors [sic], benign or malignant”. It was fulfilled by Amazon.co.uk, which means the online store packs and ships the product from one of its warehouses.

Professor Colquhoun added that the description of it as a blood cleanser was “just gobbledegook”.

A listing for “Wanithai dried crocodile blood supplement”, sold by Sabuy My Shop, claimed that the macabre pills could relieve cancer. “For those health problems such as anemia, allergies, immune disorders, cancer, diabetes and other health needs as well as the general public,” it read.

Professor Colquhoun said “The product description has to be one of the most ridiculous I’ve ever seen, which is saying something. Not only the absurd medical claims, but nonsense like ‘No preservative and no added color [sic]’. Therefore, no side-effects’. I guess radium and belladonna have ‘no preservative and no added colour’.”

The product page had only one, single-star, review from “Annette”, who wrote: “You’re claiming this can ‘relieve’ cancer? Under the 1939 Cancer Act it’s illegal to make such a claim in the UK. What on earth is this product doing on Amazon?”

The listing for “Bob’s Best Apricot Kernels”, sold by Karowi, claimed that the seeds can “give cancer cells a hard time”. Although there is some scientific writing on their use,

including small clinical trials, they have not been shown to have any benefit in treating cancer. In fact, they include Laetrile, which releases cyanide.

Josephine Jones (a blogger's pseudonym), wrote to Amazon about the products on March 15, receiving a generic e-mail in response which said her correspondence had been forwarded. She said: "Selling and advertising unlicensed cancer cures is illegal, dangerous and cynically exploits the vulnerable."

The MHRA said: "Products making a medicinal claim need to be licensed. It is against the law to advertise treatments for cancer and we will be contacting Amazon."

Amazon did not respond to several requests for comment.