

ENERGY ENHANCERS A US COMPANY MAKES BIG CLAIMS ABOUT ITS PRODUCT. BUT, SAYS JAMIE WALTERS, EXPERTS ARE SCEPTICAL

Is this just a bad patch?

David Beckham and his Real Madrid teammates have been photographed wearing them and a slew of US sports stars – from American footballers to weightlifters – endorse them. Their manufacturer says they can raise energy levels by up to 20 per cent in ten minutes and distributors claim they can help sufferers of serious illnesses such as cerebral palsy and cancer.



Sales pitch: David Beckham shows off his patches

They are Lifewave Energy Enhancer patches – small discs that stick to the skin and allegedly send signals telling cells to burn fat. The devices, according to the makers, are ‘non-transdermal patches’ that put nothing into the body. Instead, they employ ‘organic nanotechnology’ that uses the ‘electronic and magnetic features of the body like a cellular radio to transmit information to enhance the production of energy and stamina’.

‘Pseudo science’

Lifewave, based in Georgia, USA, says this is frontier science. Independent experts, however, believe it is a complete con. ‘It’s all based on pseudo science,’ says Edzard Ernst, professor of complementary medicine at Exeter

University. ‘The explanation of the technology doesn’t make the slightest sense and seems to be using scientific language to disguise bulls**t.’

This suspect terminology, coupled with an unwillingness to disclose what goes into the patches (a mixture of water, amino acids and sugars is as much detail as the company will give), has led to scepticism among specialists.

The company’s scientific processes have also provoked criticism. Lifewave extensively uses anecdotal evidence to prove its claims, citing a series of personal

accounts from people who say the product has helped them. Peer-reviewed university studies, the gold standard of scientific proof, are scant and the company has nothing to back up its ‘20 per cent increase in energy’ claim.

Dr Steven Haltiwanger – an American whose medical licence is on probation after he was found guilty of prescribing controlled substances in an inappropriate manner – is Lifewave’s health and science director. He says: ‘We have just completed two studies that prove the patches increase energy, but they have not been published yet. We have another 20 currently in progress and will have the results from them soon.’

But is there anything available now? Haltiwanger claims a study recently presented to a conference in Shanghai – which tested the effect of the patches on heart rate in just ten people – was peer-reviewed and proves they work.

‘Morally borderline’

However, Lifewave’s European director, Nigel Allan, says that research was not peer-reviewed. ‘The company is only a year old and it takes time to get this stuff out. Currently we market our product using word-of-mouth and anecdotal evidence,’ he says.

One such anecdote, sent to Metro by a British distributor – one of more than 25,000 worldwide – tells of an eight-year-old cerebral palsy sufferer who was able to kneel unaided for the first time after using the patches.

Ernst remains unimpressed. ‘Progress in medicine is not being made by publishing anecdotes but by



proper scientific scrutiny,’ he says. ‘The anecdotes are good promotion but what they are doing is at least ethically and morally borderline.’

Scope, the cerebral palsy charity, is also sceptical. ‘To our knowledge, no clinical trials have taken place on the benefits of Lifewave for people with cerebral palsy,’ a spokesman says.

‘Until these have taken place, we advise people to proceed with caution. Cerebral palsy is a

permanent condition for which no cure exists.’ However, Allan remains defiant and refutes claims that Lifewave is trying to make money out of vulnerable people. ‘Individuals are entitled to talk about their personal results – there’s nothing wrong with that,’ he says.

‘We don’t claim we can make the lame walk, but there are people from all walks of life who feel they have benefited from using these patches.’

WHAT LIFEWAVE RECOMMENDS

- Patches come in pairs and must be used in tandem, with the white patch applied to the right side of the body and the tan patch on the left.
- They will have the most effect on the chest, the wrists, the outside leg just below the knee and the inside of the ankle.
- Patches should be worn every other day over a 12-hour period for maximum effect.
- Do not reuse the patches once removed and only use one set at a time.
- Ensure that skin is clean and dry before applying the patch.

A pack of 15 pairs of Lifewave patches should last a month, costs about £65 and is available from www.lifewave.com/teamuk

health@ukmetro.co.uk



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