# That's a claim!



#### "100% safe!" People often think about the benefits of treatments and ignore oossible harms. But fev reatments that work are

### Key Concepts for thinking critically about health claims



"Treatment

People who are sick

often get better without a treatment. Sometime

a treatment does not

ielp and may even make

necessarily better data

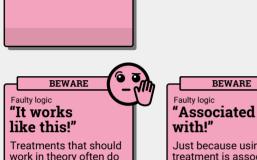
"Early is better!"

Earlier detection of 'disease' is not necessarily better.

whatever the source

needed!"





BEWARE

with people getting

better or worse, that

better or worse.

treatment made them

BEWARE

"A study shows!

shows that people who

something else, it does

not mean that is the fina

"More is better!"

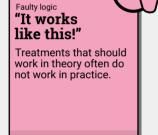
increases harms withou

ncreasing how much it

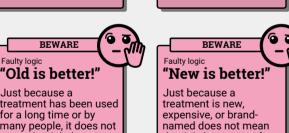
Taking more of a

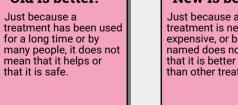
got one treatment did

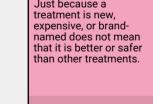
better or worse than



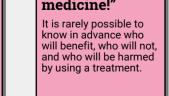








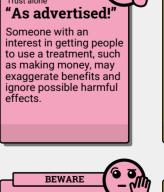














### **BEWARE** of claims treatment is associated

Dissimilar

groups

comparison

ook out for treatment

omparisons where the

omparison groups wer

Unsystematic

ook out for summaries

reatments that were no

THINK 'FAIR'

ook out for results that

elected group of peop

are reported for a

within a study or

systematic review.

f studies comparing

done systematically.

summary

Subgroup

analyses

about the evidence

THINK 'FAIR'

Indirect

comparisons

studies that are

Look out for comparison

of treatments between

THINK 'FAI

unpublished results of

No confidence

re reported using

-values instead of

No evidence

ook out for a "lack of

vidence" being escribed as evidence o

onfidence intervals.

ook out for results that

THINK 'FAIR'

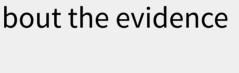
interval

air comparisons.

Selective

reporting

look out for





**BEWARE** of claims that have

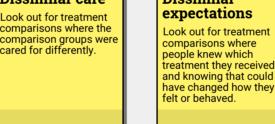
Many claims about the effects of

for the claim is not trustworthy.

treatments are not trustworthy. Often

this is because the reason (the basis)

You should be careful when you hear





a bad basis

claims that are:

Too good to be true

Based on faulty logic

Based on trust alone



THINK 'FAIR



Dissimilar

measurement

omparisons where

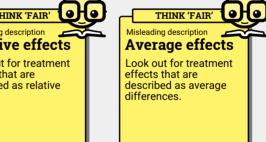
what happened was

ook out for treatment

he comparison groups

**TAKE CARE** 

when you decide





Unreliable

outcomes

assessment of

ook out for outcomes

that were not assessed

Lots of missing

ook out for treatmen

what happened was no

omparisons where

people

THINK 'FAIR'

eliably in treatment

treatment comparisons Evidence from comparisons of treatments can fool you. You should think carefully about the evidence that is used to support claims about the effects of treatments.

THINK 'FAIR' - and check

the evidence from

#### Look out for:

- Unfair comparisons of treatments
- Uncareful summaries of comparisons
- How treatment effects are described

#### Make sure that you understand what the health problem is that v are thinking about treating and that you know wh our choices are.

What is your

TAKE CARE

are your options?

#### TAKE CARE Are the people (or animals) very different?

TAKE CARE

What outcomes

matter to you?

Always ask yourself

outcomes that are

whether the treatment

important to you have

TAKE CARE

Are the treat-ments different

Always ask yourself if

in fair comparisons are

Outcomes

counted in the

Look out for treatment

eople's outcomes were

ot counted in the group

omparisons where

o which they were

Few people

Look out for treatment

effects that are based

on small studies with

or events

wrong group

been checked in fair

Always ask yourself if the treatment omparisons included only people (or animals

TAKE CARE

Are the circum-

stances diffefrom those available to you? rent from yours? lways ask yourself f fair comparisons of onducted in circumstances that are relevant.

> TAKE CARE Do the advantages outweigh the

> > Always ask yourself whether the possible advantages of a reatment outweigh the disadvantages of the

disadvantages for

TAKE CARE How sure are you?

> Always ask yourself how sure you are that of a treatment are bett han the possible disadvantages of the

#### TAKE CARE - and make good choices

Good treatment choices depend on thinking carefully about what to do.

#### Think carefully about:

- What your problem is and what your options are
- Whether the evidence is relevant to your problem and options
- Whether the advantages are better the disadvantages

## problem and what

Introduction

What should you eat? There are lots of claims about what you should and should not eat. For example, there are claims that chocolate causes acne, that it stimulates sexual desire, and that it is good for your heart. How can you know which of these claims are trustworthy? And how should you decide when to act on claims like these, or other claims about what is good or bad for your health?

There are lots of claims like this about what is good for our health. A **claim** is something someone says that can be right or wrong. A "treatment" can be anything you do for your health — for example, taking a medicine, exercising, eating chocolate, or not eating chocolate. It can also be something that we do for the health of a community — for example, making sure that water is safe to drink, making sure everyone has access to health care when they need it, or reducing the use of fossil fuels. An effect is something a treatment makes happen — like making you feel better or worse, making people more or less likely to have a heart attack or a stroke, or curing someone who

People make lots of claims about treatment effects. How can we tell which claims are right or wrong? To do this, you need to look at what supports their claim - its **basis**. For example, someone's personal experience is not a good basis for a claim about what is good for your health. This is because we don't know what would have happened if that person had done something else.

To know if a treatment (like eating chocolate) causes an effect (like sexual desire), the treatment has to be **compared** to something else (like not eating chocolate). Researchers compare a treatment given to people in one group with something else given to people in another group. Those comparisons provide evidence – facts to support a conclusion about whether a claim is right or wrong. For those comparisons to be fair, the only important difference between the groups should be the treatments they receive.

A **good choice** is one that uses the best information available at the time. For health choices, this includes using the best available evidence of treatment effects. Good choices don't guarantee good outcomes, but they make good outcomes more likely.

www.thatsaclaim.org/health

Health Choices