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Abrams-like Devices Are Toftness-like Devices and Rubbing Plates.

By Editorial Staff

As early as the 1890s, Albert Abrams, M.D. began the practice of "radionics." This involved the use of a device called a "dynamizer," that "diagnosed" patients from a drop of their blood or their signature on a piece of paper.

In 1920, the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) described Abrams as the "greatest quack of the 20th century." In 1923, Scientific America magazine in conjunction with the AMA spent over \$30,000 on a 10 month research project which exposed Dr. Abrams' fraudulent radionics devices. When Dr. Abrams died in 1924, he left his fortune to the Electronic Medical Foundation (EMF). In 1924, the EMF promoted and distributed 13 different bogus health machines of the Abrams' vintage, among them were the Depoloray; Depolatron; Oscillioclast; and Electropad.

Dr. Abrams' original device is known in our era as the infamous "black box." It was essentially a small well where the physician would place a personal item of the patient, such as a picture, a piece of clothing, hair, or even human tissue. A small rubbing plate slid over the well and the physician would rub the plate, generating enough friction to elicit a squeak. Later Dr. Abrams added a dial to modulate "frequencies," allegedly to simulate the frequency of the patients' tissues.

Claims were made for the device ranging from a method of confirming static palpation, to determining if aberrant frequencies were noted. If the frequencies could not be "matched," the physician would change the dial to match the radio frequencies to the correct vibrations. These devices were in vogue from the 1920s through the early 1960s with numerous copycat imitators from various professions.

In 1958, the FDA attained a permanent injunction against the interstate shipment of these radionic Abrams' devices. These devices all had rubbing plates. In 1961, the FDA filed criminal charges against the Electronic

Medical Foundation.

In 1936, I.N. Toftness, D.C., an early follower of Dr. Abrams, began developing his own personal version of Abrams' device for the chiropractic profession. He started with his own Toftness rubbing plate that was very crude in comparison to Abrams' more advanced device. It was similar to a drum head or plate which was rubbed, producing Abrams' infamous squeaking sound.

Being a disciple of Abrams, Dr. Toftness believed he could feel heat arising from the spine while rubbing over the spinous process, gluteal area, and about the skull without any device. He believed he had developed a sixth sense of feeling and could at times feel the heat emanating through a patient's clothing by simply holding his hand over the patient. Because his colleagues could not reproduce the "feeling" of heat he detected, he proceeded to develop a radionics device with a rubbing plate to "amplify the heat" he believed he was feeling from the body when subluxation or disease was present.

Over the years this plate was modified with new materials to amplify the squeak and to give it a more impressive look. Dr. Toftness even developed electrical rubbing plates to demonstrate what he alleged he could feel. He used the rubbing plates as a biofeedback concept to "enhance" his palpation skills; he would rub the plate with one hand while palpating a patient's spine with the other.

In essence one would place the radionics device over a patient lying on their stomach. The device was generally held by a mechanical arm from a table and with a small bowl of talcum or baby powder in it. The fingers were rubbed on the surface of the lense in a circular manner, while applying baby powder to the lens. The squeaks were counted; the more squeaks, the greater the nerve interference, disease, or subluxation. A lower number of squeaks indicated the patient was beginning to improve.

In 1975 I.N. Toftness spoke from an unpublished article at the National Institutes of Health campus, February 2-4, 1975, claiming he had made postural improvements in patients through his methods. His evidence were x-rays before and after treatment to prove a postural change had occurred; this brought him a large audience of chiropractic physicians.

By 1976, Dr. Martin E. Jenness D.C., Ph.D published "The Effects of Cardiorespiratory Exercise on Toftness Radiation," in a non-indexed medical journal (one that is not library ISBN numbered). Physicians like Dr. Toftness believed that as long as they applied some form of manipulation, they were practicing chiropractic.

Finally, in 1982, after over 30 years of citizens' complaints, the U.S. District Court of Wisconsin heard U.S. v. Toftness Radiation Detector. On January 18, 1982, U.S. District Judge Robert Warren issued an order prohibiting any use of the TRD.

Summary of the judgment:

- TRDs are in violation of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, and shall be condemned and forfeited to the FDA, who may use them for educational purposes or dispose of them by destruction or sale.
- The Toftness Postgraduate School of Chiropractic, Inc., and Irwing N. Toftness, their officers, agents, servants, employees, and attorneys, and those persons in active concert or participation with them, shall be permanently enjoined from manufacturing, promoting, selling, leasing, distributing, shipping TRDs or any article of device that is substantially the same as, or employs the same basic principles as the defendant TRDs.
- Toftness shall be ordered to provide to the Minneapolis district office of the FDA within 30 days a statement listing all persons who have either received training in the use of the TRD or are believed by defendants to be in possession of a TRD.

That order was subsequently affirmed by the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals on April 4, 1984. On October 9, 1984, the U.S. Supreme Court declined an appeal to hear the case.

Subsequently, the U.S. Department of Justice sent out the following letter to all Toftness Device owners:

Important Notice Concerning Toftness Radiation Detectors

Dear Chiropractor:

On January 18, 1982, United States District Judge Robert W. Warren issued an order in United States v. An Article of Device ... "Toftness Radiation Detector," Nos. 75-C-478 & 75-C-479 (W.D. Wis.), permanently

prohibiting any and all use of the Toftness Radiation Detector ("TRD"). That order was subsequently affirmed by the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals on April 4, 1984, and on October 9, 1984, the United States Supreme Court declined to hear the case.

Because Dr. Toftness's records indicate that you are in possession of one or more TRDs, he sent a letter to you last fall in which he cancelled your TRD lease(s) and asked you to return the TRD(s) in your possession within ten days. However, Dr. Toftness has now informed the Department of Justice that you either failed to respond to that letter or failed to return the TRD(s).

The purpose of this letter is to inform you, again, that all TRDs in your possession, custody, or control must be returned immediately to Dr. Toftness. If that is not done, the government will feel free to take appropriate enforcement action, without further notice to you, under either Judge Warren's order or the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

If you no longer possess any TRDs, do not simply ignore this letter. Instead, please provide a written explanation as to what happened to the TRD(s) you previously possessed.

Today there are devices of design which are substantially the same as a TRD or Abrams-like device. Literally hundreds of cases could be filed against rubbing plate, toftness-like practitioners, as well as those who still possess TRD devices. Recently, a number of chiropractors have been brought before state licensing boards for disciplinary action.

The use of these devices is not only illegal, it isn't even chiropractic. Abrams-Toftness rubbing plate devices did not originate within the chiropractic profession, nor are they taught by any of our chiropractic colleges. Some malpractice carriers refuse to insure the few chiropractors that still insist on using the device.

Obviously, just because a member of the profession attempts to use a device in conjunction with chiropractic care, doesn't necessarily make it a "chiropractic" device. Nor should the chiropractic profession be accountable for something that was never accepted by the profession at large.

Just as the medical profession was not accountable for Dr. Abrams' original use of rubbing plate devices, so the chiropractic profession should not be held liable for the attempted application of the Toftness device into

chiropractic practice.



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