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Letter to the Editor

Reply to Paolo Bellavite

Dear Editor,

The recent letter by Dr. Paolo Bellavite tried to address the critical issues discussed in my latest contribution about *Oscillococcinum*® in this Journal. His rebuttal does not contain any further clue about the efficacy of *Oscillococcinum*® from Boiron, and yet he referred to papers that do not deal with *Oscillococcinum*®. The complete absence of a sound reply about the scientific body of *Oscillococcinum*® was a clear disappointment for me. Few years ago, Bellavite wrote a book on *Oscillococcinum*® committed by Boiron and assessed his expertise in the field. Notwithstanding, Bellavite focused his reply on a presumptive conflict of interest from this writing author. Fundamentally, Bellavite has lost his occasion to dismiss criticism raised in [1], particularly when he quoted the contribution by Mathie et al., in Cochrane Database [2]. He reported verbatim: “there is insufficient good evidence to enable robust conclusions to be made about *Oscillococcinum*® in the prevention or treatment of influenza and influenza-like illness” but leaves some hope for a positive outcome: “Our findings do not rule out the possibility that *Oscillococcinum*® could have a clinically useful treatment effect” [2]. This conclusion is a misunderstanding, as it waits for a forthright positive evidence pro-*Oscillococcinum*®, which is actually lacking. Aside from ref. [2], no evidence taking into account the potential of *Oscillococcinum*® against flu was further reported. Following past Weissmann's editorial [3], no standing commentary endowed with undisputable evidence was further raised to support *Oscillococcinum*® in clinics.

Oscillococcinum® lacks of undisputable positive evidence.

My personal consideration is that Bellavite misconstrued my comments about the biased interest by reporting his *excusatio non petita* in the footnote about the conflict of interest statement. In ref. [1] I wished simply to report what the common reader might suspect when meeting the evidence that any positive effect related to *Oscillococcinum*® was almost all published thanks to the direct sponsor of Boiron. I did not talk about bias in my letter [1]: I suggested a possible misunderstanding. Actually a misunderstanding did occur. My apologies for this.

Conflict of interest statement

The Author states he has no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Chirumbolo S. *Oscillococcinum*®: misunderstanding or biased interest? Eur J Intern Med 2013 doi:p11: S0953-6205(13)00985-0.
- [2] Mathie RT, Frye J, Fisher P. Homeopathic *Oscillococcinum*® for preventing and treating influenza and influenza-like illness. Cochrane Database Syst Rev 2012;12 (CD001957).
- [3] Weissmann G. Homeopathy: Holmes, Hogwarts, and the Prince of Wales. FASEB J 2006;20:1755–8.

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