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Bogus back claims draw penalties

## **Chiropractors face fines for advertising treatment with questionable spinal-traction device**

By VIRGINIA HENNESSEY

Herald Salinas Bureau

Local prosecutors have won injunctions and civil penalties against two Central Coast chiropractors and are asking anyone who was treated with a questionable spinal-traction device to notify their office.

Prosecutor John Hubanks said the chiropractors, Charles Strong and Tony Hoang, anonymously advertised in local newspapers offering a free report to consumers regarding the **DRX-9000**, an "FDA approved medical technology" that offered an "86 percent success rate for treating debilitating back pain without surgery."

The deceptive ads claimed the **DRX-9000** was an effective treatment for multiple herniated disks and sciatica and was based on "an accidental NASA discovery" that outer space quickly and easily solved most back pain. In fact, Hubanks said, NASA has determined space travel has a detrimental impact on the spine.

Hubanks said the District Attorney's Consumer Protection Unit demanded substantiation of the claims from the chiropractors and the device's

distributor, Axiom Worldwide Inc., but has received none. He said a multi-agency task force is investigating avenues of possible civil and criminal actions against the company.

Strong, a Watsonville chiropractor, was fined \$25,000 for violating false-advertising laws.

Hoang of Monterey was also fined \$25,000, but \$17,000 of his fine was suspended, Hubanks said, because of his cooperation with prosecutors.

"He was great. He worked with us immediately when he realized the advertising couldn't be substantiated," said Hubanks. "My understanding is a media kit was provided at the time of sale of these devices."

Hubanks said he was particularly worried about the elderly and those without health insurance paying exorbitant fees for the treatment, which may aggravate their painful conditions.

Anyone who has been treated with the **DRX-9000** by any health-care provider can reach the Consumer Protection Unit at 647-7705.

herald.com.

*Virginia Hennessey can be reached at 753-6751 or  
vhennessey@montereyherald.com.*