

Debunking Junk Internet Health Claims

A field guide for anyone who reads health claims online. Ten things to look for, where to check them, and one doctor who hits nearly every one.

Real science is boring and transparent. Scams are exciting and mysterious.

Once you notice that difference, most of the internet sorts itself out.

Who is Dr Steven Gundry?

A real surgeon giving nutrition advice, which are two different jobs.

What checks out

- An MD from the Medical College of Georgia
- A career as a cardiothoracic surgeon, with research published in peer-reviewed surgical journals
- Former faculty at Loma Linda University

Why that isn't nutrition expertise

- Cardiac surgery training is not training in diet, digestion, or epidemiology
- His lectin thesis, that plant proteins in beans, grains, and vegetables drive most disease, is classified as pseudoscience by the medical and nutritional communities
- The MD travels with him as a shield for claims that contradict established nutritional science

What to look for

01 – 05

- 01 No peer review
- 02 Stories instead of studies
- 03 Cherry-picked evidence
- 04 Correlation dressed as cause
- 05 Claims you can't disprove

06 – 10

- 06 Small studies, huge conclusions
- 07 The seller is the source
- 08 Credentials doing the work
- 09 Big claims, thin proof
- 10 No methods, no controls

No peer review

The claim only ever appears where the claimant controls the publish button.

How it shows up

- A blog post, a video, or the seller's own product page as the only source
- A conference poster or abstract described as a "published study"
- No journal name, no volume, no DOI you can paste into a search box

Where Gundry fits

His headline "peer-reviewed medical publication" is an abstract in a journal supplement for a poster presentation. T. Colin Campbell notes there is no published detail of the methods, the subjects, or the results, and calls the glowing description misleading.

Stories instead of studies

A wall of happy customers doing the job a controlled trial should be doing.

How it shows up

- Before-and-after photos and “I felt it in three days” as the proof
- Comment sections full of short, generic praise from thin accounts
- Negative reviews missing, hidden, or answered in private

Where Gundry fits

His November 2021 poster claiming mRNA vaccines “dramatically increase” inflammation carried no statistical analysis and rested on anecdotal data. The American Heart Association issued an expression of concern; Reuters found it gave no reliable evidence.

Cherry-picked evidence

Every study that agrees gets a citation. The ones that disagree go unmentioned.

How it shows up

- One supportive paper cited over and over, never a contrary one
- Citations that turn out to be about something else entirely
- Large population studies skipped in favor of a single lab result

Where Gundry fits

He cites a paper on staining kidneys with lectins as evidence that lectins cause kidney disease; the paper was about using lectins as a testing tool. Meanwhile the longest-lived populations eat legumes daily, and whole-grain eaters show lower heart disease, cancer, and all-cause mortality.

Correlation dressed as cause

Two things happen near each other, so one is said to cause the other.

How it shows up

- “Rates of X rose as people ate more Y,” with nothing else considered
- A marker moves in a blood test and gets named the cause of a disease
- People who take the product feel better, and nothing else changed, apparently

Where Gundry fits

Patients give blood samples, results are said to suggest lectin damage, and the fix is his supplement line. Harvard’s Qi Sun puts the actual position plainly: lectins are not a particular health concern, and Americans do not eat enough of them to matter.

Claims you can't disprove

The claim is built so that no evidence could ever count against it.

How it shows up

- “The studies are suppressed,” so the missing data becomes the proof
- Doubt is reframed as being fooled by industry or by your own doctor
- Methods withheld for “proprietary reasons”

Where Gundry fits

The pitch runs on conspiracy framing: conventional medicine does not want you to know this, healthy foods are secretly poison, and he alone is telling you. Every rebuttal from nutrition researchers becomes further evidence of the cover-up.

Small studies, huge conclusions

A narrow result gets stretched to cover everybody, everywhere.

How it shows up

- Cell, animal, or plant studies presented as findings about your diet
- A few dozen participants becoming advice for the whole population
- Isolated doses far beyond anything a person would actually eat

Where Gundry fits

The lectin harm studies were run in cells, animals, and plants, not humans. From that he concludes that beans, grains, and many vegetables drive most human disease, which the medical and nutritional communities classify as pseudoscience.

The seller is the source

The person naming the danger is the person selling the protection.

How it shows up

- A problem you had never heard of, plus a proprietary fix for it
- A product line broad enough that something always applies to you
- Financial interests mentioned nowhere, or in the smallest type on the page

Where Gundry fits

\$960

A year for Lectin Shield alone, at \$79.95 a month, before Total Restore, Bio Complete 3, or the \$120 skin care. He named the problem and sells the only cure.

Credentials doing the work

The title carries the claim because the evidence can't.

How it shows up

- A genuine credential from a field unrelated to the claim
- “Doctors agree,” with no doctor named and nothing to check
- Lab coats, stock footage labs, and a TV appearance sold as endorsement

Where Gundry fits

A real MD and former cardiothoracic surgeon, publishing in surgical journals, now advising the world on nutrition. He also runs at least nine social accounts under variations of his own brand, which reads like many independent voices and is one marketing operation.

Big claims, thin proof

The bigger the promise, the more evidence it owes you, and the less it tends to show.

How it shows up

- Vague multipliers: “up to 30 times more,” with no measured figure
- “Clinically proven,” with no trial you can open and read
- One product that reverses disease, adds years, and has no downside

Where Gundry fits

His olive oil is marketed at “up to 30 times” the polyphenols of supermarket oil, which is a ceiling against the worst oil on the shelf, not a measurement. Independent testing found about 586 mg/kg, genuinely high, and nowhere near the claim.

No methods, no controls

You are shown the result and never the work behind it.

How it shows up

- No control group, so there is nothing to compare the result against
- Sample size, dose, and duration all left out of the story
- Lab tests referenced but never published, batch by batch

Where Gundry fits

O

Batch certificates of analysis published in the five years since testing graded his oil lampante, the defect grade. No control groups in his research either, per Robert Eckel of the American Heart Association.

Try/Buy Maïa? Six flags on one sales page

THE FLAG	WHAT THE PAGE DOES
Manufactured urgency	A countdown timer promising a discount that expires
Authority with no trace	A “cardiologist” with no board listing, clinic bio, talks, or publications
Research by name only	“Harvard research shows” the flavanols work, with no study named, no link
A trial that says otherwise	COSMOS cited as proof of a 39% gain; the trial found no significant benefit
Impossible safety claim	“Zero side effects” for a bioactive regimen aimed at medicated older adults
Nothing you can verify	No variety, origin, or maker disclosed; a misstated Trustpilot score

Who is Dr Layne Kilpatrick?

A pharmacist with a million followers, talking about cocoa.

What checks out

- A pharmacy degree from the University of Utah, 1989, which makes him a registered pharmacist
- A very large audience: over a million followers on Instagram, close to 500,000 on TikTok
- His opening fact checks hold up, including the missing FDA response letter and the unsupported 20x flavanol claim

Why that isn't cocoa expertise

- No medical degree, and no endocrinology or hormone board certification behind the “hormone specialist” brand
- His California pharmacist license and pharmacy permit were revoked for serious unprofessional conduct, which his site does not mention
- Nothing in his training covers cacao genetics or farming, and the videos slide from checkable facts into “who gave Mars the right to edit every cocoa tree on Earth”

Five questions worth asking

- “Where is the peer-reviewed trial, in humans?”
- “Who makes money if I believe this?”
- “Does this contradict what the major health bodies say?”
- “Could this claim ever be shown to be wrong?”
- **“Why is the person making the claim also selling the cure?”**

Where to check, in two minutes

Find the study

Search the claim, not the brand, in Google Scholar or PubMed, and check the citation on CrossRef. If the trial does not exist, you already have your answer.

Check the person

State medical board sites list licenses, specialties, and discipline. Search the name on its own. A long practice leaves a trail that is easy to find.

Check the pictures

Reverse image search on Google Images or TinEye catches stock labs, borrowed doctors, and before-and-after photos that have been around for years.

**Don't share it until you have
checked it.**

The one habit that beats all of them.