

# Let them eat shit

*When orthodox medicine fails, the alternative drug sales force can move in—and make a killing. Duncan Campbell and Nigel Townson expose a fraudster who's profiteering by selling extract of excrement to sick and dying people*

**A** French con-man is selling people with debilitating illnesses a costly and potentially dangerous remedy based on extract of human excrement. "Inventor" Yves Gerard Delatte has repeatedly and falsely described a mystery white powder, called "Delta Te", "Ecoflorin", or "Symbion", as a "treatment" for serious diseases. He has told patients facing deadly illness that "Delta Te" (a permutation of the letters of his name) can "restore the immune system and give it the ability to cure the body".

Delatte's recipe mixes cultivated human intestinal bacteria, including streptococcus faecalis, with milk powder or acid whey. This is added to a much larger quantity of starch. Analysis by Thames TV's programme *Thames Reports* (broadcast this week), of a sample provided by Delatte to St Stephen's Hospital shows that the recipe is in fact 90-95 per cent ordinary starch. The remainder, 5-10 per cent of the weight, is milk powder into which is mixed a sprinkling of bacteria. Delatte has been known to store bacteria and other ingredients for his powder in a domestic freezer, mixing it up in an ordinary kitchen, using normal kitchen scales, and taking no special precautions, such as gloves or overalls, to maintain hygiene or sterility.

Delatte has no medical or scientific qualifications, and has worked primarily over the last ten years as a salesman for agricultural silage. He cannot even spell correctly the names of diseases involved in Aids. He has misled psychologically vulnerable and desperate patients about his experience and expertise. He has told them, misleadingly, that his powder "is a way to win time... Delta-Te will do what the T cells cannot do, because they are missing." He has held out hope that "in the long run, it will restore a part of the immunity". A few months after he first concocted Delta Te, Delatte started telling customers that he had successfully rid himself of HIV infection—an astonishing and unique claim,

which would be bound, if believed, to sway patients into buying his powder. Challenged to produce evidence for this claim last month, Delatte changed his story and said his alleged "HIV positive" test result had in fact been false.

So far, over the last nine months, Delatte and collaborators have persuaded more than 130 British Aids, HIV and myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) sufferers to buy and swallow his powder—at an estimated total cost of at least £20,000. He hopes to earn at least £500,000 in the UK over the next three years from people suffering from Aids, HIV infection or ME. Two of his former associates say, from personal knowledge of the ingredients, that each kilogram of "Symbion" or "Delta Te" costs a few pounds to make. But it is sold for between £85 and £500 a kilogram. Patients taking Delta Te or Ecoflorin are urged to eat a kilogram every month (and pay at least £1000 a year) by swallowing it, daily, mixed in water.

Delatte has persistently refused to tell patients the exact composition and ingredients of his secret powder. The first patient to take "Delta Te" was Aids patient Gordon Black, who started 13 months ago. He told us: "I've done the whole thing on trust. I don't know what's in it. He (Delatte) is very secretive. I've never really got satisfactory answers."

According to Delatte, all 37 of the British Aids patients he has treated became well. This claim is wholly inaccurate, according to Gordon Black, who has "progressed" to full-blown Aids while he has been taking it. No-one else, he says, had taken it for more than six months. Nor are they all well, or better. Dr Mick Connelly of St Stephen's Hospital says that of five patients who have taken "Delta Te", two are "very ill" and a third is dead.

No scientific research has been done to show that Delatte's mixture produces any beneficial effect on human beings. Gordon says he felt he had "more energy" after taking the powder



**"Inventor" Yves Gerard Delatte also claims to be a talented skier, as pictured above in Finland**

—even though he developed full-blown Aids a few months later. Other customers have also said they felt better. But doctors have long been familiar with—and indeed often themselves exploit—the well-known effect whereby patients who have committed themselves to a therapy, for example by paying a large sum of money, want to feel better and therefore do feel better.

According to St Stephen's Aids consultant Dr Brian Gazzard, claims made for "Delta Te" are "a load of claptrap. I can't see any possible benefit at all." But the product could cause harm to people who are ill with Aids, he said. "[The bacteria] may get access to circulation and cause harm... even with quite moderate immune suppression, people taking this stuff could develop disease." Although no-one taking Delta Te or Ecoflorin is known to have become ill, we spoke to five patients taking a similar recipe who have suffered severe reactions, including liver toxicity, swollen stomachs, and headaches.

Delatte got the idea for Delta Te after learning of the commercial success of a similar Swedish made powder, called "Probian". This had been promoted in Britain by a woman in Brighton, Monica Bryant, who calls herself the "International Institute of Symbiotic Studies". Bryant was then selling Probian, as well as other expensive "alternative" remedies, through Symbiogenesis Ltd, a company she also owned.

According to former Symbiogenesis business manager Mike Smith, Bryant carefully conceals from customers the fact that her "Institute" is in effect a sales front for her company. Symbiogenesis is registered at and trades through a box number address in London. But both organisations operate from the same rooms in Bryant's house at 5 Fairlight Place, Brighton. Bryant consistently omits to say the products the Institute promotes are those the company sells.

Smith contacted the Campaign Against Health Fraud when it was launched last month, to describe how Delatte had turned up in Brighton





**Delatte in prison in Helsinki, in 1967, after being caught working illegally**



**"Whitecliffe Laboratories" turn out to be a suburban semi near Aylesbury**

a year ago with luggage containing bags of live bacteria. Delatte and Bryant proposed to make a new version of Procion, called Symbion, which would be far more profitable than selling the powder she imported from Sweden.

Smith then watched "in absolute disgust" as Delatte and Bryant went into Bryant's kitchen and, using kitchen scales, concocted the recipe for Symbion. Several kilograms of the bacteria Delatte had imported were then left in her fridge. The freeze dried bacteria was left loose in the kitchen. Soon afterwards, Smith suffered severe headaches and sinus pains, probably caused by the dried faecal bacteria left floating in the kitchen atmosphere.

A packing company in Hove was soon contracted to mix and pack the bacteria and starch for a production run of "Symbion". Bryant now sells this at £160 a kilogram. According to Smith—who worked out the product costings for Bryant before leaving her company—Symbion costs about £20 a kilogram to make. Bryant disputes this and says the costs are now £47 a kilo (about 90 per cent of which is Delatte's charge for bacteria). Delatte then started marketing his own stock of the same concoction under the name "Delta Te". A Brighton Aids charity was persuaded to pay Delatte £500 for the first kilogram he supplied to Gordon Black.

Delatte has been anxious to deny that he has urged patients to stop taking the conventional anti-Aids drug AZT, and to buy Delta Te instead. He says he has merely highlighted that AZT can cause anaemia. He also said that, three months ago, "Susan Jay" (whose real name he told me), a London woman infected by HIV, was given a free supply of "Delta Te". After she was given free "Delta Te", Susan agreed to help debunk AZT, which she had previously tried, in a critical newspaper report on the drug. In consequence of the report about Susan, several other patients decided to stop taking AZT.

Apart from the 37 British Aids patients, about 100 ME sufferers have been persuaded to take the powder, according to Martin Lev of the ME Action Campaign. It was sold to them through Symbiogenesis and other companies under the alternative name "Ecoflorin". Although the ME Action Campaign had previously circulated favourable information about Ecoflorin, Lev said this week they now viewed "with grave concern" the revelations about Delatte.

Delatte has also claimed to have cured "Mink Aids", a disease which does not exist. Its real name is Mink Aleutian Disease, and according to British veterinary experts, there is no cure for it. Nor is it an immune deficiency disease, despite superficial resemblance to a few symptoms of Aids. At a seminar in London on 22 April, organised by a group called "Positively Healthy" and attended by about 100 people suffering from Aids or HIV infection, Delatte claimed that he had recently had a 99 per cent success rate in curing "Mink Aids". He told the listeners that 893 out of 900 minks suffering from the disease had been cured during a trial last winter in the Netherlands.

But Delatte's claims are "completely false", according to Dr Peter Van Beek of the Bostel Veterinary Centre—where the trial was supposed to have happened. This week he told us: "There never was a trial." Delatte had been in touch with the centre and had proposed such an experiment. But researchers at Bostel thought his ideas were "nonsense" and refused to contemplate any experiment until Delatte submitted a proper scientific protocol—which he has failed to do.

Delatte also told the "Positively Healthy" seminar he had spent several years developing his compound in Finland. In a subsequent interview with NSS, he claimed he had researched the use of lactic acid bacteria in silage "under the supervision" of the State Veterinary Institute in Helsinki, with researcher Jouni Kangas. ▽

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**ANTHONY BARNETT**

**The Independent, 1 June 1989**

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**Delatte facing questioning by Thames TV's "Thames Reports" this week: patients and support groups have been conned into thinking that his mystery powder "boosts immunity"**

But Kangas and other Finnish veterinarians ridicule Delatte's claims ever to have done scientific research in Finland, or to have cured mink disease. "Delatte knows nothing about Aleutian Disease or lactic acid bacteria, which I have worked with here," says Kangas. "There is no cure. Delatte is not a researcher (and) has no education." Kangas recalls that Delatte was a salesman for a French silage company who had visited the Institute on two or three occasions in the early 1980s. He was then interested in "the preservation of offal from slaughtered animals". He had never worked at or for the Institute. Everything that Delatte has told Aids patients about experiments with animals appears to have been invented in order to support his claim to have devised a successful therapy.

From March until May this year, Delatte had bacteria for his powder cultivated at Dundee University's "Biotech" unit. He misled staff there about his intentions. At first, he told them that he was making feedstuffs for animals. Then he admitted that he was treating human beings, and claimed untruthfully the treatment was approved by a leading London hospital.

Dr Rodney Herbert told us that Delatte's conduct had aroused "very grave concerns" at the university. He claims to have warned Delatte that the industrial production methods used by the Biotech unit could not make material which could be guaranteed safe for human consumption. Delatte—who unlike a bona fide practitioner has no professional liability insurance, and could not therefore compensate anyone he injured or poisoned—simply ignored the warnings. What Delatte was doing, Dr Herbert told us, "seemed to contravene all the standards that would normally apply... This sort of work would have to go through an ethics committee." Dundee University have refused to renew Delatte's contract. A statement by the university stresses that he never told them he was making "Delta Te" or running a sales campaign for it.

Delatte had also misled staff at Dundee and Aberdeen University—which maintains a national depository of industrial bacteria—into thinking he was a medical doctor. Staff at Aberdeen told us: "He spoke about 'his patients' {and} called himself 'Dr Delatte'." Neither university knew that his supposed "laboratories" at Princes Risborough were in fact lodgings in a suburban semi.

Another scientist with whom Delatte tried to cooperate last summer broke off contact with him after he ignored the need to carry out ethical and safety trials before selling his powder to Aids patients. She had been approached by Delatte and asked to help research the possible efficacy of human medical treatments using bacteria. She tried to interest city financiers in backing the idea. But her attempts to plan genuine research failed completely when Delatte was unable or unwilling to provide any evidence of his career background or alleged product development work.

The scientist, who is a specialist at London University, has asked not to be named because of the risk of damage to her reputation following her short association with Delatte. Delatte, she said, was a "rogue", "utterly unethical" and "totally unscrupulous". He had effectively tricked her into researching aspects of the bacterial activity, then appropriated and misrepresented her researches to sell his powder.

Delatte has told Dundee University staff and others that the leading London hospital, St Stephen's, has been conducting clinical trials of "Delta Te". In a "circular letter" to 100 Aids patients from "Whitecliffe Pharmaceuticals Ltd" and dated 6 March 1989, Delatte also wrote that he was "hopping (sic) to start clinical trials at St Stephen's Hospital (to get) more datas (sic)". But Dr Brian Gazzard, Aids consultant at St Stephen's, says he was "horrified" to see the hospital's name misused in this way. He added "categorically, we have no intention whatsoever

of doing a trial".

In interviews with NSS and Thames, Delatte has acknowledged recklessly breaking companies law by repeatedly doing business using an unregistered company name, "Whitecliffe Pharmaceuticals Ltd". He has acknowledged importing bags of live bacteria to Britain for his experiments—and cannot show that he ever declared these imports to Customs or health officials.

Delatte's activities are currently under investigation by the Department of Health. Officials there who have studied the literature he has distributed to patients say that "he is a complete confidence trickster. Our hair stood on end (on seeing his claims to 'boost' immunity). They are passing this off as a drug. He's guilty at the very least of advertising an unlicensed drug. He's breaking a lot of laws." They are also particularly angry that Delatte has attempted to browbeat patients into staying on his drug to keep the price down for others.

The 1968 Medicines Act prohibits selling medical products without a licence, when these are claimed wholly or mainly to be medical treatments. Delatte does not have a product licence. If prosecuted and convicted, Delatte could face fines or two year's imprisonment.

Delatte has tried to persuade many people that he is working to help them without seeking personal gain, and that he has a large personal overdraft. Despite this, he has been able to afford—on his own admission—at least 20 international trips over the past year. He also operates businesses in the United States, Sweden and Finland, including "Fin-Bact" of Helsinki, Biosilages of Uppsala, Sweden, and Delatte USA Incorporated, Hartford, Connecticut. Like "Whitecliffe Pharmaceuticals" in Britain, these companies are unregistered in the countries concerned. The telephone numbers and offices used are accommodation addresses.

Whitecliffe Pharmaceuticals Ltd does not exist. Its true name is Quickopen Ltd. In October 1988, Delatte was warned by his solicitors that he had already broken the Companies Act by using the unregistered name. But he continued to do so for another five months. More recently, he bought another company called Specmarket Ltd to promote and sell his powder. Specmarket has now been renamed "Whitecliffe Laboratories", which trades from 5 Chiltern Close, Princes Risborough. Delatte has refused to divulge the location of the laboratories—which is not surprising, since there are none.

Psychiatrist Dr Stephen Burton, one of whose patients was given the "circular letter" from Delatte now being investigated by the Department of Health says "I think it's very simple. The man is obviously out to make a lot of money out of people who are psychologically vulnerable to offers of cures."

"Quack" is a kind word to use of Delatte", said Dr Burton. "What he's doing is monstrous". The real "secret formula" behind quack remedies like "Delta Te" is their usefulness for milking vulnerable people of large sums of money.

*This report was compiled in conjunction with Thames TV's Thames Reports, whose report was transmitted earlier this week, and with Jukka Rislakki of Helsinki Sanomat newspaper, Helsinki. The names of patients have in most cases been changed to protect their health and privacy.*