

FDA trains guns on Fitness Highway for misleading ad

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Losing that extra flab around your tummy seems like a cakewalk, if advertisements in a leading city tabloid are anything to go by. A misleading advertisement published on May 2 led to state Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officials to file an FIR against Dr Bhavana Shah, who runs weight-loss clinics by the name Fitness Highway in the western suburbs.

The advertisement mentions that their weight-loss techniques are 'FDA approved'. On seeing the ad, FDA officials began probing into the workings of Shah's clinics. Two women FDA officials were then sent to Shah's clinic in Andheri (West) as decoy customers looking to lose weight.

"It is shocking to see that Dr Shah has been making such false claims. The state FDA has no jurisdiction in such matters, of approving weight-loss techniques," said Sanjay Kale, joint commissioner, vigilance, FDA.

One of the FDA officials who had posed as a decoy customer said, "The weight-loss packages explained by a dietician were very expensive, priced anywhere between Rs10,000 and Rs35,000 or

Several complaints against the clinic

Numerous women have complained about the clinic's techniques. "After my pregnancy, I joined Bhavana Shah's Fitness Highway. I paid Rs35,000 for 25-inch loss through tummy tucks, which is done through massages. It's been eight months now and I have reduced only six inches. When I complained to Shah, she said my body has a water retention problem and that is not her problem," reads a complaint.

more. The clinic accepts only down payment before beginning the treatment." Later, five drug inspectors, including the two decoys, went to inspect the clinic.

FDA officials then filed an FIR against Shah under the Drugs and Magic Remedies Act, 1954 (objectionable advertisements), at Amboli police station on Friday. According to the Act, drugs or treatment claiming to cure up to 51 ailments, including obesity, HIV, diabetes and cancer, cannot be published or telecast in the media.

"We are contemplating booking the clinic and its proprietors

under section 420 of the Indian Penal Code for cheating the public. An FIR has been filed and investigations are underway," said Shrikant Jadhav, duty officer at Amboli police station.

The FDA has also slapped a notice on Shah's clinic demanding to know who published the ad. "We also demand to know if Dr Shah has technical data and proofs of the claims being advertised — losing 10kg through a VELA machine," said an FDA official.

When dna called the clinic posing as a customer, the receptionist explained, "We conduct weight loss and inch loss through use of VELA machine. Multiple electric pads of the machine are fitted on to the body which work through areas of fat. Each session consists of 45 minutes."

Numerous women have thronged a consumer awareness website www.consumercomplaints.in to complain about the clinic's techniques.

While Shah was unavailable for comment, branch head at the Andheri Clinics, identified as Lavita, said, "The FDA inspectors had come for investigation. There is no proof of the allegations made against us. Let the law take its own course."

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