

# 'Psychic doctor' told to pull ad

Promising everything from love spells to cures for HIV, scam artists who pose as traditional healers are taking South Africans for a ride.



(Image: Wikimedia Commons)

This was highlighted in a recent ruling by the Advertising Standards Authority, which ordered a Johannesburg man claiming to be a doctor with "supernatural abilities" to withdraw his advert on his flashy website.

The man, known as Dr Semba, claims to be a "psychic with mystical powers" who can cure epilepsy, high blood pressure and depression. He also promises "normal" births to people who have had miscarriages or still births.

Tshwane University of Technology associate professor Rudi de Lange, 56, stumbled across the website when researching misleading marketing communications and reported it to the advertising watchdog.

He claimed that the ad "misleads consumers" and exploits their "superstitions and beliefs". The title "Dr" was used by Semba to make the advert "more believable", De Lange said.

But Semba, of Sandton, northern Johannesburg, claims he is one of the few "chosen, called and blessed" to heal. He charges R200 for a consultation.

"I was chosen by my ancestors and this responsibility was handed down to me to help mankind," claimed Semba, who refused to divulge his full name. He said he was unaware of the complaint.

The ASA had harsh words for Semba in its ruling.

"The proliferation of charlatan healers in recent years is concerning," it said. "This issue ... is no doubt causing harm to the credibility of legitimate practitioners."

Phephisile Maseko, national co-ordinator of the Traditional Healers' Organisation, said: "We are seriously against fake professionals."

Source: The Times, via I-Net Bridge

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