Alternative therapies crackdown

31Oct02

**ALTERNATIVE health products promising cures for diseases such as cancer and AIDS will be stamped out as part of a NSW government crackdown announced today.**

The move follows the death of a child with a heart defect, whose parents chose a South American herb treatment instead of the advised conventional medicine.

The Government has appointed University of NSW Professor of Medicine, John Dwyer, to head a committee which will review existing laws and regulations governing alternative therapies.

NSW Health Minister Craig Knowles said the onus would be on the manufacturers making claims of miracle cures to prove they were true before they were allowed to continue on the market.

Products on the market included contraptions made from children's toys, he said.

"When you see something of this nature, they are 100 bucks and promise a cure for AIDS ... a cure for Hep C, a promise for a cure for cancer - it is just wrong and needs to be stopped," Mr Knowles told reporters.

Denying the crackdown was a "witch-hunt", Mr Knowles said while there were many legitimate alternative therapies, the focus would be at the "Dodgy Brothers end".

Advertisements of alternative products promising cures for major illnesses had risen in recent years with a sweep of websites conducted by the Health Care Complaints Commission counting 77 sites in NSW.

Laws to investigate and prosecute "quacks" and the powers of health professionals boards such as the NSW Medical Board would also be strengthened as part of the crackdown.

Penalties for marketing bogus health products would be increased and a public education campaign initiated.

*This report appears on news.com.au.*