# Ofcom fines Word Network £150,000 for misleading health claims



Ofcom, the UK’s communications regulator, has levied a fine of £150,000 against the religious television channel Word Network. This decision follows claims made in two episodes of *Peter Popoff Ministries*, a programme hosted by American televangelist Peter Popoff, where a product known as "Miracle Spring Water" was advertised as having the ability to cure cancer and improve various serious health and financial conditions.

On Tuesday, Ofcom confirmed that they had found the channel in breach of broadcasting code regulations, which include the requirement to protect the public from potentially harmful material. According to Ofcom, the programmes presented repeated statements and testimonials asserting the water's effectiveness, which they cited as having the potential to mislead viewers regarding serious illnesses, including cancer.

The regulator identified that the channel's assertions went beyond mere expressions of faith, stating: “While having regard to the broadcaster’s and audience’s rights to freedom of expression and religion, we considered the claims that contacting the ministry, or using its ‘Miracle Spring Water’, were effective ways to improve serious medical illnesses or financial difficulties, went beyond proclamations of faith and religious teachings and practice.” Ofcom highlights that religious programming should not take advantage of the susceptibilities of its audience or promote products and services inappropriately.

One episode aired on May 10, 2023, featured a woman who claimed her lung cancer condition improved after using the product. The guest testified to experiencing significant life changes, including securing a job and a home, which she attributed to Miracle Spring Water. “Peter, this lady used the Miracle Spring Water. She was broke, she was destitute, she had nothing. But after using the Miracle Spring Water, what did God do?” Liz Popoff, Peter’s wife, commented during the broadcast.

Another episode that aired shortly before this on May 9 included testimonials from viewers claiming that the water had aided in overcoming issues such as drug addiction, diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and financial struggles. Both episodes incorporated pre-recorded instructional segments on how to order the product, a practice noted by Ofcom in their assessment.

In their response to the fine, Word Network contended that their programming had been broadcast without incident for many years, describing Ofcom’s sudden enforcement of these rules as "abusive." The channel suggested that Ofcom maintained double standards by permitting nudity and pornography while scrutinising a religious outlet that aims to provide comfort and support to its viewers.

Ofcom has taken a firm stance on this matter, stating that in addition to the financial penalty, the channel must not re-broadcast the offending programmes and must provide a statement regarding Ofcom's findings, to be communicated on a date and in a format yet to be determined by the regulator.

The attention placed on this issue reflects a broader trend, as Ofcom recently imposed similar fines on other religious programming, including a £25,000 penalty against the religious satellite channel Loveworld. This is in addition to Ofcom's previous revocation of the licence for RT (Russia Today) UK, which faced fines and sanctions related to impartiality breaches.

As it stands, both Peter Popoff and Word Network have been approached for comment on the situation surrounding the fine and subsequent regulatory actions.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/ofcom-american-peter-god-ukraine-b2712891.html> - This article corroborates Ofcom's fine against Word Network for broadcasting claims about 'Miracle Spring Water' and its alleged health benefits, including curing cancer. It also details Ofcom's concerns about the programme's potential to mislead viewers.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/ofcom-american-peter-god-ukraine-b2712891.html> - The article further explains Ofcom's stance on religious programming not exploiting audience susceptibilities and the channel's response to the fine, including their claim of double standards by Ofcom.
* <https://www.ofcom.org.uk> - Ofcom's official website provides general information about their role in regulating communications services and enforcing broadcasting codes, which supports the context of their actions against Word Network.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/ofcom-american-peter-god-ukraine-b2712891.html> - This article mentions Ofcom's previous actions, such as fining Loveworld and revoking RT UK's licence, highlighting a broader trend of regulatory enforcement.
* <https://www.ofcom.org.uk> - Ofcom's website offers resources and bulletins related to their regulatory activities, which can provide further context on their approach to broadcasting violations.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/ofcom-american-peter-god-ukraine-b2712891.html> - The article details specific episodes of Peter Popoff Ministries and the testimonials presented, which Ofcom found to be in breach of broadcasting regulations.