Dissecting “The Dr. Oz Show”

Despite being criticized by scientists for relying on flimsy evidence, sued by a New York viewer who claimed to have received third-degree burns after following his recommendation to sleep with heated rice-filled socks, and scolded by a member of Congress for promoting dubious weight-loss products, Mehmet Oz, MD, host of “The Dr. Oz Show,” continues to attract millions viewers. And those viewers often show up in physicians’ offices asking about the advice and treatments discussed on the Emmy-winning daytime TV show.

So how valid are the recommendations touted on this and other medical talk shows? Researchers from the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, attempted to answer that question by studying the extent to which the advice lines up with medical evidence. They watched 40 episodes each of “The Dr. Oz Show” and “The Doctors,” a program co-hosted by six physicians, from 2013, and randomly selected 80 recommendations from each show to study.

They found support (“at least a case study or better evidence”) for only 54 percent of the recommendations reviewed.

The researchers found evidence supported 46 percent of the recommendations from “The Dr. Oz Show” and contradicted 15 percent of the advice. Evidence was not available for 39 percent of the recommendations. The most common recommendation category on “The Dr. Oz Show”: dietary advice.

“The Doctors” fared better. The investigators found evidence supported 63 percent of the recommendations, contradicted 14 percent and wasn’t found for 24 percent. The most common recommendation category: consult a health care provider.

The researchers, who published their findings in the December 17, 2014, issue of the *British Medical Journal*, cautioned the public to be skeptical of advice given on such shows.