



Peter Popoff Ministries

Type of case	Broadcast Standards
Outcome	In Breach
Service	The Word Network
Date & time	24 May 2024, 23:00
Category	Harm, religious programmes and promotion of products and services
Summary	The programme contained potentially harmful claims that contacting the presenter’s ministry and/or ordering its “Miracle Spring Water” could improve serious health conditions and/or financial situations. In breach of Rules 2.1, 4.6 and 9.4.

Introduction

The Word Network is a religious channel aimed at the Christian community and available on satellite subscription services. The licence for the service is held by Word Network Operating Company Inc (“the Licensee”).

Peter Popoff is a televangelist who presents the *Peter Popoff Ministries* series of programmes with his wife Elizabeth (Liz) Popoff. This programme included footage from Peter Popoff’s religious services, held at various locations in the United States, and occasions when Peter Popoff and his wife Liz Popoff directly addressed viewers from a studio.

Ofcom received two complaints about an episode of *Peter Popoff Ministries*, which included references to the ministry’s “Miracle Spring Water”.

A voice-over introduced the programme by saying:

“God has used Reverend Peter Popoff throughout his entire life and ministry to bring miraculous deliverance to hundreds of thousands of people around the world. Stay tuned as Reverend Popoff ministers, prays and reveals the power of a living God able to change your life and bring you into great joy, peace, health and

supernatural abundance. Now, get ready for God to touch you with his miracle-working power”.

The rest of the programme contained frequent oral and visual invitations to order the ministry’s “Miracle Spring Water”. For the majority of the programme, a strapline was displayed across the bottom of the screen containing the text: “CALL OR SCAN NOW FOR YOUR FREE MIRACLE SPRING WATER”, together with: US and UK telephone numbers; a QR code; and details of Peter Popoff’s website and Facebook page. Towards the end of the programme, a postal address for Peter Popoff also appeared on-screen alongside this information.

When inviting viewers to order the “Miracle Spring Water”, Peter Popoff made several claims about its efficacy. For example:

Peter Popoff: *“No-one could ever make me doubt that God had – didn’t have a divine purpose in connecting you to this ministry. I don’t believe it’s an accident that you’re watching today. I believe that the Holy Spirit led me to you and you to me. You see, I just can’t bond with anybody. No, no. But when I sit down, and when I feel the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and I begin to talk to you, I feel a special connection, like I’m talking to someone who’s very close. And today, I want to tell you that we can take a point of contact – the Miracle Spring Water, the testimonies Liz has shared with you and is going to share with you – and find our way out of the darkness. We can use this Miracle Spring Water to find our way out of distress and despair. Are you ready? I said, are you ready? You know that everything in your life hinges on and will be changed by the decisions you make today. In fact, the decisions that you make right now. Wrong decisions are going to create pain and heartache. But the right decision will produce peace of mind, health, prosperity”.*

Peter Popoff: *“And you’re going to hear the results of that faith in just a moment, when my wife begins to read the testimonies, but I want you – I’m speaking to you under the unction of the Holy Spirit – I want you to start looking for some changes in your own situation. As I prayed, even this morning, the Holy Spirit allowed me to feel the mental frustration of so many people right now over an unanswered prayer. He also showed me the secret tears that you’ve shed, and the sacrifices that you’ve made, and some of the hard times he’s brought you through. And then, the Holy Spirit whispered these words to me: ‘Tell my children that they have finally reached the turning point. The seeds they’ve sown in the past are now ready to produce’. Praise God, that got me excited. And this is exciting, because I have some real good news for you. Today you are on God’s mind. Believe, believe me, believe what I’m telling you. Whatever circumstances and problems you’re struggling with right now, they’re not permanent, no, they’re passing, even as I talk to you, they’re a temporary inconvenience, and*

they will pass. Whatever you do, don't count God out yet. Just believe that he has something better for you. Yes he does! You're going to experience this. Like Job in the Bible, when those around you that you've trusted let you down, don't get discouraged and give up. I feel I'm talking to somebody specifically right now. Don't give up".

** * **

Peter Popoff: *"Now I want to offer the Miracle Spring Water to you again. Thousands of people have used it. And as you use it, your faith is a key that will make this Miracle Spring Water work. Take it".*

** * **

Peter Popoff: *"That's why I've got to get this Miracle Spring Water into your hands. Call the number on your screen, request it, it's free. You'll use this simple faith tool and your faith is gonna defeat the enemy that lurks in the darkness all around you. I'm talking about fear, sickness, poverty, stress, failure, everything else that's working against you. This step of faith isn't for unbelievers and people who dare – won't dare to believe. It's for those who will act in faith. I want to send you the Miracle Spring Water. It's absolutely free. I'll tell you how to use it. Amen, I'll tell you how to anoint the needs in your life to see success. I believe God is going to show you new ways [to] success, give you God ideas that will let you experience blessings in your life. And believe me when I say God's ready to shine some new light on new ways to bless your finances and all your money matters. I just see abundant blessings in store for you as you move in faith and as you use the Miracle Spring Water. It's free. Don't miss this miracle moment. Call, write, right now and request it".*

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Peter Popoff: *"Supernatural debt cancellation. Amen. I believe it's gonna happen – for you. Let us send you the Miracle Spring Water".*

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Peter Popoff: *"I have to tell you, I'm speechless, as we are at our meetings, and the people line up to tell me about the things that God has done, the miracles that they've experienced in their body and their finances, I'm shocked. Pleasantly surprised. Amen".*

Liz Popoff: *"Sometimes, sometimes we don't have time to listen to all the testimonies of people that come".*

Peter Popoff: *"There's so many".*

Liz Popoff: *“And when we go and you ask them ‘Does anybody want the Miracle Spring Water?’, it’s a deluge of people that want the second dose of Miracle Spring Water”.*

Peter Popoff: *“Amen”.*

Liz Popoff: *“It’s just overwhelming”.*

Peter Popoff: *“We pulled into a trailer park in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the woman: ‘Oh! You’re the pastor that has the Miracle...Do you have any with you?’ I said, ‘I’m sorry, we don’t.’ But we’ll send it to you free. You can text, call, write”.*

Liz Popoff: *“Whatever’s easiest for you”.*

The programme also contained pre-recorded sequences accompanied by a voice-over, including the following:

“Are you ready to be totally debt-free, have all your bills erased and paid in full? If so, this message is for you. Reverend Peter Popoff wants to show you how to erase your debt, simply by using powerful instruments of faith he wants to send you: the Miracle Spring Water and the anointed faith tool. You don’t need to live bound by debt anymore, your debt-free jubilee season is here now, with the Miracle Spring Water and the anointed faith tools. When you receive the Miracle Spring Water and anointed faith tools in the mail, just follow Reverend Peter Popoff’s step-by-step instructions. Pray over all of your bills, credit cards, bank accounts, all of your debt. Release your faith and expect your miracle. Call the number on your screen right now [US and UK telephone numbers appeared on-screen] and let the power of God erase all of your debt and live debt-free once and for all. Ask for your free packet of Miracle Spring Water and the anointed faith tools”.

The above sequence was played twice during the programme.

* * *

“Thank you for watching today’s programme. The prayers and support of viewers like you will help us to reach out to people everywhere with the life-changing gospel of Jesus. God’s timing is always now. This is your year of miracle opportunities. So call the number on your screen for your free packet of Miracle Spring Water. Before we leave the air, we want to remind you that if you need a miracle to call or write today. Call for your free packet of Miracle Spring Water...”

During the final part of the last sequence, an additional caption appeared on-screen: *“GET REVEREND POPOFF’S LATEST BOOK FOR ANY SIZE LOVE OFFERING”*. This was accompanied by a voice-over inviting viewers to obtain Peter Popoff’s new book in exchange for a *“love offering of any size”*:

“...and also get your copy of Reverend Popoff’s new book, 27 Benefits of Divine Favor, that will show you exactly how to release God’s extreme favour in your life, for a love offering of any size to this ministry”.

Another key element of the programme was a series of short interviews with members of Peter Popoff's congregation and/or viewers of *Peter Popoff Ministries*, who said they had made contact with Peter Popoff either via direct correspondence or by ordering the "Miracle Spring Water". The interviewees provided an account of how their lives had been improved as a result, detailing their or their loved ones' full recovery from serious illnesses; significant improvements to their financial situation; or their complete recovery from an addiction to alcohol and/or drugs. In addition, Liz Popoff relayed further such accounts which had been sent in writing or told to her by an interviewee. For example:

Speaker 1: *"About a year and a half ago, I was diagnosed with lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and God have healed my body. I went to the doctor in September. I could not dress myself seven months ago. My four year-old son had to get me dressed. I couldn't even hardly walk about five months ago, and God have healed my body. You told me that I was gonna get healed. I watch your show, I pray, I'm also a pastor here in Kansas City, Missouri. I believe, I have faith, that I was gonna be healed, and in September they done a brand-new MRI on me, and I was healed by Jesus a hundred per cent"*.

* * *

Speaker 2: *"And just recently I got the Miracle Spring Water – again, I'm sorry, I got it twice – and this time, and I think it was March, I received a \$35,000 debt cancellation"*.

* * *

Speaker 3: *"Five years ago I contacted your ministry and got Miracle Spring Water and was delivered from 35 years of drug addiction: methamphetamine, marijuana, cocaine, just every drug you can get your hands on"*.

* * *

Liz Popoff: *"Here's one from North Carolina... 'You told me when you sent the Miracle Spring Water back to me after you prayed over it that something good is going to happen in my life. And that God was going to direct my steps into financial success that I had never dreamed I would have. I followed the instructions and placed my money in my wallet then carried it just like you told me to. God has blessed me with over \$70,000. I paid off all my bills and have much money left over'"*.

* * *

Speaker 4: *"I used to drink every day. I didn't miss a day. Every day, I thought I had to have it. And when I got the medical manna, I don't drink no more, and I don't – I used to smoke a little marijuana, I don't do that no more. And also, I wanna tell you about the Lord, He saved me. I was supposed to be dead, really. I got sick, and my husband – I got sick one week, I got sick. And I got so sick I couldn't eat, I wasn't eating, I*

couldn't even take a bath myself, I couldn't tie my shoes straight, I couldn't get up the bed, I couldn't go to work. And my husband, he brought me some lunch, 'cause he knew I couldn't get up or do nothing. And he said, 'Oh no', he looked at me, he said, 'You gotta get out of here, you gotta go to the hospital'. And when I got there, they told me, they said, 'You got – we got to do emergency surgery on you right now'. My bowels and everything had shut down, everything had stopped working. And when I got in the hospital, there was four surgeons in the hospital, two on the side, and two on the side. They told me, said, if I didn't – if things didn't get to working, they had to go in and do surgery on me, 'cause nothing was working. I was in pain, it felt like someone had a knife just stabbing me, over and over in my stomach. And when they put me in the room by myself, I was about to give up, and don't you know, the pains went – I didn't have to have surgery – all the pains went away, they went away. And I was ready to go home, and they would not let me go home, because I was such in a bad shape, when I first came in there".

Following the last sequence, Peter Popoff confirmed with the speaker that this incident occurred after they had used the "Miracle Spring Water".

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Liz Popoff: *"She got the Miracle Spring Water, she put it on her back and on her stomach, all the places that hurt, and as soon as she did that she was instantly healed..."*

Speaker 5: *"Yes".*

Liz Popoff: *"...But not only her, but her son, who's standing over there..."*

Speaker 5: *"Yes, yes".*

Liz Popoff: *"...And her son has gone on and gotten his education..."*

Speaker 5: *"And graduated".*

Liz Popoff: *"...And graduated, and his capacity to learn increased..."*

Speaker 5: *"Yes, yes".*

Liz Popoff: *"...And she's been blessed in every place she goes, she's got money, she's got an increase in her finances..."*

Ofcom considered the material raised potential issues under the following rules of the Code:

Rule 2.1: *"Generally accepted standards must be applied to the contents of television and radio services...to provide adequate protection for members of the public from the inclusion...of harmful and/or offensive material".*

Rule 4.6: “Religious programmes must not improperly exploit any susceptibilities of the audience”.

We also considered that the references to Peter Popoff Ministries’ “Miracle Spring Water” and to Peter Popoff’s book “27 Benefits of Divine Favor” raised potential issues under Rule 9.4 of the Code:

Rule 9.4: “Products, services and trade marks must not be promoted in programming”.

We therefore sought comments from the Licensee as to how the programme complied with Rules 2.1, 4.6 and 9.4 of the Code.

Response

The Licensee did not respond to our request for comments under the Code or provide any representations on Ofcom’s Preliminary View.

Decision

Reflecting our duties under the Communications Act 2003,¹ Section Two of the Code requires that generally accepted standards are applied to the content of television services to provide adequate protection for members of the public from the inclusion of harmful and/or offensive material. Section Four of the Code requires broadcasters to exercise a proper degree of responsibility when making and broadcasting religious programmes. Section Nine of the Code limits the extent to which commercial references can feature within editorial content to help ensure a distinction between advertising and programming is maintained.

In reaching this Decision, Ofcom took account of the right to freedom of expression, as set out in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (“ECHR”). Article 10 provides that everyone has the right to freedom of expression including the right to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without unnecessary interference.

Ofcom also had regard to Article 9 of the ECHR which states that everyone “has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”. This Article goes on to make clear that freedom to “manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of...health...or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others”. In particular, Ofcom also took into account that many people find comfort and solace from prayer or a belief in faith healing when ill or encountering personal difficulties.

Our investigation did not question the validity of religious belief. In accordance with our duties, we considered whether the Licensee provided adequate protection for viewers from any harmful material in accordance with Rule 2.1, whether the programme improperly exploited their susceptibilities in breach of Rule 4.6, and whether the programme contained the promotion of products, services or trade marks in breach of Rule 9.4.

Rule 2.1

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/21/section/319>

Rule 2.1 of the Code requires that generally accepted standards must be applied to the contents of television and radio services to provide adequate protection for members of the public. Context is an important factor when applying this rule. The extent of any protection required will depend on all the circumstances, including: the service on which the material is broadcast; the degree of harm (and/or offence) likely to be caused; the likely expectations of the audience; and the effect of the material on viewers who may come across it unaware.

Ofcom examined the programme to assess whether it contained potentially harmful material.

Peter Popoff repeatedly urged viewers to order the “Miracle Spring Water”, emphasising both the ease of doing so and the positive outcomes which he said would result:

“That’s why I’ve got to get this Miracle Spring Water into your hands. Call the number on your screen, request it, it’s free. You’ll use this simple faith tool and your faith is gonna defeat the enemy that lurks in the darkness all around you. I’m talking about fear, sickness, poverty, stress, failure, everything else that’s working against you”.

The voice-over that accompanied one of the pre-recorded sequences claimed that using the “Miracle Spring Water” would leave viewers “*totally debt-free*”, with “*all [their] bills erased and paid in full*”, enabling them to “*live debt-free once and for all*”.

The programme included testimonies in which people explained how contact with Peter Popoff or the use of “Miracle Spring Water” had brought about:

- their or their loved ones’ full recovery from serious illnesses;
- significant improvements to their financial situation; or
- their complete recovery from an addiction to alcohol and/or drugs.

Ofcom considered that these claims related to viewers’ health and wealth. In 2017, Ofcom commissioned a qualitative research report² into audience attitudes towards health and wealth claims in programmes, and the potential harms that may arise from them. The research indicated that there is a hierarchy of factors that affect the level of potential harm arising from such claims. Ofcom subsequently issued guidance³ (“the Health and Wealth Guidance”) to broadcasters in this area which drew on the findings of the research. This guidance highlights the severity of the situation (e.g. a life-threatening illness or extreme financial hardship), the level of targeted exploitation (i.e. the vulnerability of the audience) and the authority of the speaker as primary factors that would influence the level of potential harm arising from health or wealth claims. The guidance also highlights how the inclusion of an alternative perspective or a warning (e.g. one that advises audience members to consult a qualified doctor before making decisions about their health based on information included in a programme) can be used by broadcasters to protect viewers from potential harm.

² <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-standards/health-and-wealth-claims-in-programming-audience-attitudes-to-potential-harm>

³ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-guidance/programme-guidance/broadcast-code-guidance/section-2-guidance-notes.pdf?v=322622>

In this case, the illnesses discussed in the programme, for example lupus, rheumatoid arthritis and organ failure requiring emergency surgery, are clearly serious health conditions. Addictions to alcohol and drugs are also serious, because of their potential impact on physical and mental health. The programme also referred to financial problems, including debts and bills, sometimes involving significant amounts of money (e.g. “*I received a \$35,000 debt cancellation*”; “*God has blessed me with over \$70,000. I paid off all my bills and have much money left over*”). Audience members may be considered vulnerable when they are suffering from serious health issues or experiencing financial problems, and the severity of the situation may increase this vulnerability.

Ofcom considered that viewers were likely to have understood from the testimonies broadcast in the programme that serious medical and financial problems could be resolved by direct contact with Peter Popoff Ministries or by using the “Miracle Spring Water” as directed in the programme. Further, the testimonies were provided in the context of a religious programme and presented by Peter and Elizabeth Popoff, religious preachers who were likely to be perceived by the audience as having authority.

Ofcom therefore considered that such claims had the potential to cause harm because members of the audience may have been led to believe that contact with Peter Popoff Ministries or using the “Miracle Spring Water” alone was sufficient to resolve serious health or financial problems, and in the case of health issues, that it was unnecessary to rely on, or continue using, conventional medical treatment. This could have a damaging effect on vulnerable viewers targeted by the presenters’ invitations.

While the references to “[s]upernatural debt cancellation” and the testimonies from people who said they had received money did not present the possibility of physical harm, Ofcom considered these claims may have resonated with a significant number of vulnerable viewers, particularly in light of the current cost of living. In Ofcom’s view, the combination of testimonies and the promise of money as a result of using the “Miracle Spring Water” may have resulted in financial detriment, as it could have led viewers to believe that their financial problems could be resolved by the use of “Miracle Spring Water” alone, preventing them from taking other steps to address those difficulties.

We took into account that all primary factors affecting the level of harm, as listed in the Health and Wealth Guidance, were present in this programme. As a result, Ofcom considered the risk of harm to viewers was high.

Ofcom therefore examined whether the Licensee had taken any steps to provide adequate protection for viewers who could have understood the content to be demonstrating that faith (e.g. using “Miracle Spring Water”) alone could resolve the health and wealth issues identified in the programme.

We acknowledged the freedom of thought, conscience and religion afforded by Article 9 of the ECHR and that some people take comfort from a belief in faith-healing practices. We also took into account that *Peter Popoff Ministries* is a religious programme and that viewers are likely to expect it to contain content relating to faith healing and prayer. However, notwithstanding these factors, the Licensee is required to provide adequate protection from potentially harmful material.

Ofcom considered that, as the claims made in this programme were about serious health conditions and financial problems, the risk of harm was especially high. Accordingly, Ofcom took the view that the need for adequate protection in the case was significant.

The programme did not contain any information about the importance of viewers seeking expert advice from qualified medical professionals or financial advisers and there was no challenge or any

other form of context provided to the claims of efficacy made about Peter Popoff Ministries' "Miracle Spring Water".

Taking into account these factors, Ofcom did not consider that the Licensee had provided adequate protection from broadcast content that presented a high risk of harm to viewers. Our Decision is therefore that the material breached Rule 2.1 of the Code.

Rule 4.6

Rule 4.6 of the Code requires that religious programmes must not improperly exploit any susceptibilities of the audience. Ofcom's guidance⁴ to Rule 4.6 makes clear that when programmes are soliciting a response from their audience, broadcasters need to take care and recognise possible risks to audience members, particularly those who may be vulnerable. The guidance to Rule 4.6 notes that "improper exploitation" includes seeking to convince a person to subscribe to a particular set of beliefs "on the grounds that if they don't, some negative outcome might result".

As set out above, the programme contained repeated statements and testimonies that improvements to people's health or wealth had occurred, or would take place, as a result of ordering and using the "Miracle Spring Water", or contacting Peter Popoff Ministries directly. Ofcom considered that viewers were likely to infer from such statements that negative outcomes would result for them if they did not order the "Miracle Spring Water" or contact Peter Popoff Ministries, i.e. their health or financial problems would continue. On one occasion, Peter Popoff made this point explicitly:

"We can use this Miracle Spring Water to find our way out of distress and despair. Are you ready? I said, are you ready? You know that everything in your life hinges on and will be changed by the decisions you make today. In fact, the decisions that you make right now. Wrong decisions are going to create pain and heartache. But the right decision will produce peace of mind, health, prosperity".

He also said that viewers had reached a "turning point" in their lives, which further emphasised the importance of the decision.

As set out above, Ofcom had regard to the freedom of thought, conscience and religion afforded by Article 9 of the ECHR and that some people take comfort from a belief in faith-healing practices. We also took into account that viewers of a religious programme are likely to expect it to contain content relating to faith healing and prayer. However, given the religious nature of the programme and the status and authority of the presenters, Ofcom considered that vulnerable viewers – in particular those who were either suffering from serious health conditions or experiencing financial problems – were less likely to question the content and, as such, were susceptible to the numerous and repeated claims made in the programme.

In our view, Peter Popoff exacerbated the potential risk by talking to camera in a manner that suggested he was directly addressing a specific viewer, while also associating his message with the divine power of the Holy Spirit:

"I don't believe it's an accident that you're watching today. I believe that the Holy Spirit led me to you and you to me. You see, I just can't bond with anybody. No,

⁴ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-guidance/programme-guidance/broadcast-code-guidance/section4.pdf?v=328891>

no. But when I sit down, and when I feel the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and I begin to talk to you, I feel a special connection, like I'm talking to someone who's very close".

"I'm speaking to you under the unction of the Holy Spirit...I feel I'm talking to somebody specifically right now".

Ofcom considered that this presentational style was likely to have a significant impact on viewers who were isolated and vulnerable as a result of difficulties they were experiencing, and that the references to the Holy Spirit further reinforced Peter Popoff's status and authority as a religious preacher.

Taking the above factors into account, and given that no adequate protection was provided to viewers as set out under Rule 2.1 above, Ofcom considered that the programme specifically targeted susceptible viewers and that there was a material risk that these members of the audience had been improperly exploited. Ofcom's Decision is therefore that the material breached Rule 4.6 of the Code.

Rule 9.4

Rule 9.4 of the Code requires that products, services and trade marks must not be promoted in programming. Ofcom's Guidance⁵ on Rule 9.4 explains: "where a reference to a product or service features in a programme...the extent to which a reference will be considered promotional will be judged by the context in which it appears".

Rule 9.4 prohibits the promotion of products, services and trade marks within programmes irrespective of whether they are offered in return for payment or not.

The programme contained frequent visual and oral invitations to viewers to order Peter Popoff Ministries' "Miracle Spring Water". Contact details for Peter Popoff Ministries were displayed on-screen for the majority of the programme. Additionally, the testimonies featured during the programme (as set out above) and the language used to describe the product's popularity (e.g. "Thousands of people have used it"; "[I]t's a deluge of people that want the second dose of Miracle Spring Water") and effectiveness (e.g. "We can use this Miracle Spring Water to find our way out of distress and despair"; "I just see abundant blessings in store for you as you move in faith and as you use the Miracle Spring Water") served to encourage viewers to place an order.

In addition, the programme contained an oral and visual invitation to obtain Peter Popoff's book "27 Benefits of Divine Favor" in exchange for "a love offering of any size", which Ofcom understood to mean a financial contribution to Peter Popoff Ministries. In any case, Rule 9.4 applies irrespective of whether the promoted product is offered in return for payment or not, as stated above. The voice-over claimed that the book would "show you exactly how to release God's extreme favour in your life", which served to encourage viewers to order a copy.

⁵ Ofcom's guidance to Section Nine of the Code is currently being updated. An archived version of the guidance is available, which does not always reflect the current rules, is available via the National Archives: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20200701171240/https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/33611/section9_may16.pdf.

Ofcom's Decision is that the programme therefore promoted two products – Peter Popoff Ministries' "Miracle Spring Water" and Peter Popoff's book *27 Benefits of Divine Favor* – in breach of Rule 9.4 of the Code.

Conclusion – Decision

In Issue 487 of Ofcom's Broadcast on Demand Bulletin,⁶ published on 4 December 2023, we recorded breaches of Rules 2.1, 4.6 and 9.4 against the Licensee for the broadcast of *Peter Popoff Ministries* programmes on The Word Network on 9 and 10 May 2023.

In Issue 497 of Ofcom's Broadcast on Demand Bulletin,⁷ published on 7 May 2024, we recorded further breaches of Rules 2.1, 4.6 and 9.4 against the Licensee, in relation to *Peter Popoff Ministries* programmes broadcast on the same channel on 6, 7, 8, 11 and 12 December 2023.

In both cases, the breaches concerned the promotion of "Miracle Spring Water" and claims that using this product, or otherwise contacting Peter Popoff Ministries, could cure serious health conditions and solve financial problems. Ofcom is currently considering the breaches in the first case for the imposition of a statutory sanction. We have also put the Licensee on notice that we are minded to consider the second case for the imposition of a statutory sanction.

Ofcom is extremely concerned that almost identical issues have again been identified, well after we recorded breaches of the same rules in similar content broadcast by the Licensee. Given the circumstances of this case, the breach decision-maker's initial view is that the breach is serious and – given the Licensee's compliance history – repeated and Ofcom is therefore minded to consider it for the imposition of a statutory sanction. The sanctions panel will reconsider this initial view during the sanctions process.⁸

Decision: Breaches of Rules 2.1, 4.6 and 9.4

⁶ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/about-ofcom/bulletins/broadcast-bulletins/2023/issue-487/peter-popoff-the-word-network-9-and-10-may>

⁷ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/about-ofcom/bulletins/broadcast-bulletins/2024/issue-497/peter-popoff-ministries-the-word-network-6-12-december-2023---decision.pdf>

⁸ These two sentences were added on 14 October 2024 as a clarification.