

12 May 2006

By: Cosmin Nitu, Editor, Software Reviews



Spyware Doctor

Desperate times call for a professional solution.

There are so many forms of harming a computer that if one were to make a list with the types of malicious programs that are loose out there, it would take forever. If you would need a different program for every scoundrel piece of software that infects your computer, where would that lead to? Luckily enough, there are developers out there, such as PC Tools Software, that create all-in-one solutions to help you in your fight against evil. **En garde!** Spyware Doctor is such an application that helps protect your system against spyware, adware, keyloggers, Trojans, trackware, spybots and other types of malware. The friendly interface that the program has helps you get used to its functions easier, and start hunting right away. The main screen shows the system's status, providing information about the last scan and update that's been made. Also, placed in the center of the window, are three buttons that represent the main actions you need to do in order to have a clean computer: Scan now, Immunize computer (against all known threats) and OnGuard protection (real-time protection). The threat of a trojan is smaller than the one of a virus, mainly because even though it can be greater in damage, a trojan does not have the means to multiply and spread itself. But "thanks", to ActiveX technology that offers developers a way to download small executable objects that can run directly on the user's machine, trojans have now become a ticking bomb waiting for you to "click" it in order to be activated. Spyware Doctor takes care of this issue, and features an Immunizer that makes sure your computer isn't affected by any ActiveX based threats that may sneak into your machine (it checks every component before it is loaded and makes sure it's safe, and only then it allows it to run). Other spyware programs such as keyloggers that record everything you type (including usernames and passwords, exposing your personal information to the wrong people) are also detected. If you are the one that installed such an application, you can add it to the Ignore list, the Doctor will not bother you anymore. An annoying type of malicious program is the web browser hijacker. All it does is modify your browser settings, so that you are directed (without your will) to a website that can contain advertisements, annoying messages or even ActiveX components; and from here we know where this road leads to. What's worse is that some hijackers are so good, that they can alter your browser in such a way that you won't be able to fix it back, even if you modify the system registry settings. But, again, our application comes to the rescue and doesn't allow this situation to occur. Some programs are loaded when Windows starts, so all you can do in this case is watch as they mess with your computer. The Spyware Doctor also takes care of these malicious applications, and you won't have to worry anymore. You can scan your system thoroughly using the full scan option, you can deactivate some scanners (custom scan function) or you can perform a quickscan. This is to check the harm that's been done to your computer so far. In order to prevent future damage from being done to your system, you can turn the "OnGuard" function on, and let the real-time protection do the work for you. This feature is customizable, and you can have the program monitor just a part of the computer activity, by turning on and off any of its components: startup guard, exploit guard, browser guard, immunizer, keylogger guard, network guard, process guard, scheduler and site guard. Just like the threat ignore list that's created for programs, Spyware Doctor includes a Domain whitelist that you can manage. The settings panel gives you good control over the program, and you can setup. **Touche!** There's a smart update function that enables you to connect to the producer's server and download the latest list of threats so that no new menace would harm your system. After using this program I was left with a good impression and I will surely be more relaxed, since I won't receive any warnings about potential dangerous threats,

because Spyware Doctor takes care of things. **The Good** like the many features that Spyware Doctor offers, and the way they're structured resulting in good functionality and performance. **The Bad** The bad part about this program is that it's limited to scan only. Nevertheless, you can buy a license, which doesn't cost much for what the program has to offer and the problem is solved. **The Truth** I was impressed by the program because it offers so many features packed into this friendly package that helps you give your computer a long and healthy life. *Check out the screenshots below to see the program in action:*