

Singh v the British Chiropractic Association

In 2008, the British Chiropractic Association launched a defamation lawsuit against science writer Simon Singh over an op-ed in which he suggested chiropractors lacked evidence for some of their medical claims. Maryam Omid examines the case.



The British Chiropractic Association unsuccessfully [sued](#) science writer Simon Singh over an opinion piece published in the Guardian newspaper in 2008, in which he had suggested chiropractors lacked evidence for their medical claims on treating childhood maladies such as colic and asthma. The BCA filed the lawsuit even though the Guardian offered an apology, a clarification and a right of reply.

In a preliminary hearing, Mr Justice Eady [ruled](#) that by using the phrase “[the BCA] happily promotes bogus treatments”, Singh was accusing the association of “thoroughly disreputable conduct”. The judge added that as Singh was stating facts instead of opinion he could not use the defence of “fair comment”. Singh maintained that he was not accusing the association of deliberately promoting sham treatments but simply that their claims were not based on evidence.

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In the final ruling, three Appeal Court judges [overturned](#) the initial ruling, concluding that Singh's piece was legally permissible as fair comment. They said: "Accordingly this litigation has almost certainly had a chilling effect on public debate which might otherwise have assisted potential patients to make informed choices about the use of chiropractic."

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