

EMBARGOED UNTIL 17TH JANUARY 2018, 7AM GMT

International fundraising campaign raises over £30,000 to help science writer sued by naturopath

An international community of scientists, science writers and critical thinkers has come together to raise more than £30,000ⁱ within three days, to help a science writer who is currently being sued over her work highlighting the dangerous and misleading claims of the naturopathic industry.

Britt Hermesⁱⁱ is an American former naturopath and author of the blog "[Naturopathic Diaries - Confessions of a naturopathic doctor](#)"ⁱⁱⁱ. In a blog post regarding ineffective cancer cures, she was critical of the medical and fundraising practices of the Naturopathic Cancer Society and the Nature Works Best Cancer Clinic.

A naturopath involved with both organisations, 'Dr' Colleen Huber^{iv}, has subsequently taken Britt to court, claiming the post constituted defamation. In contesting the case, Britt faces substantial legal costs in order to continue defending her science writing against the accusations of defamation.

Eran Segev, President of the Australian Skeptics Inc^v, coordinators of the international fundraising campaign to help Britt, said: "We are concerned by the case brought against Britt, not only over the merits or otherwise of the libel action, but particularly that the case may have the effect of silencing a major campaigner against unproven and disproven 'medical' practices through the imposition of considerable legal costs."

The fundraiser cites other similar libel cases, including an Australian scientist who defended a 2011 case against a pseudoscientific weight loss product manufactured by SensaSlim^{vi}, and a case brought by the British Chiropractic Association against science writer Simon Singh in 2008^{vii}. Following a judgement that Simon could use a "fair comment" defence, the BCA dropped its case in 2010.

Segev explained: "Despite the BCA dropping their case, Simon was still left with substantial legal costs. While no-one likes to see anyone suffer punitive costs under such circumstances, Simon is a successful author, and had the support of colleagues and scientists all around the world. Britt is not in a similar financial situation; she is a PhD student in evolutionary biology at the University of Kiel, Germany. That is why we have organised this international campaign to support her financially.

"This is not an endorsement of the statements by Britt that are the subject of this case - we are not in a position to assess the legal merits of the case - but a defence of a leading campaigner in an area that most scientists and critical thinkers would regard as pseudoscience and pseudomedicine."

The campaign, which hoped to raise at least £50k to help Britt with her legal defence, has garnered considerable attention – raising more than 60% of that initial milestone in just three days.

Segev said of the early success: "While the response by the community has been incredible, legal cases can be protracted, unpredictable and expensive affairs, so we still require further donations to reach the £50k – or even more – that we need to ensure that Britt doesn't risk financial ruin for writing about pseudoscience."

Those wishing to support Britt, can visit the [donations page](#)^{viii} to make a donation.

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- Britt Hermes is available for comment at brittmariehermes@gmail.com.
 - Eran Segev is available for comment at eran@segev.com.

Notes for Editors:

ⁱ \$52,000AUD has been raised so far, equivalent to £30k, or €33,500 in Germany where Britt is being sued

ⁱⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britt_Marie_Hermes

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.naturopathicdiaries.com/>

^{iv} Huber is a doctor of naturopathy in the US – a qualification which would not, under UK advertising law, permit her to use the title Doctor when marketing herself to the UK public regarding matters of health.

^v <https://www.skeptics.com.au/>.

^{vi} <https://www.skeptics.com.au/2011/07/24/ken-harvey-and-sensaslim-the-bills-come-in/> The campaign raised in excess of A\$40,000, ensuring that Dr Harvey did not have any ‘out of pocket’ legal expenses. The case was subsequently found in his favour and he was awarded costs, however the company went into liquidation and Dr Harvey received no money.

^{vii} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BCA_v._Singh

^{viii} <http://www.skeptics.com.au/BrittHermes>