

Prince of Wales 'ideologically fixated' about alternative medicine, says Simon Singh

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Camilla and Charles, Duke and Duchess of Cornwall Photo: PA

By Matthew Bayley, Kerala

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The Prince of Wales refuses to accept the failings of alternative medicine despite compelling evidence that it provides little benefit to patients because he is 'ideologically fixated', one of Britain's leading science writers warned yesterday.

The heir to the throne will not accept that treatments such as homeopathy, acupuncture and chiropractic therapy do not work in the vast majority of cases, according to Simon Singh.

Speaking at the [Hay Festival \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/hay-festival/\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/hay-festival/) in Kerala, India, Singh said that hundreds of scientific studies had concluded that alternative medicine is ineffective.

Yet despite this, the Prince of Wales continues to believe the therapies can help patients because of his ideological commitment to the natural world, Singh said.

'He only wants scientific evidence if it backs up his view of the natural treatment of health conditions,' he said.

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In 2008 Singh co-authored a book entitled 'Trick or Treatment' that set out to look at more than 30 forms of alternative medicine and examine the scientific evidence of their effectiveness.

It was dedicated to the Prince of Wales after the Prince publicly demanded more research to judge whether they worked.

The book – which Singh sent to Clarence House - concluded that in most cases the performance of alternative treatments when compared to conventional medicines are 'dismal'.

Yet the Prince persists with his beliefs, Singh said.

'We presented evidence that disputes the value of alternative medicine and despite this he hasn't changed his mind,' he told the festival, which is sponsored by The Daily Telegraph.

This is because he is 'ideologically fixated' about the benefits of nature, he claimed. 'It's a shame, because he's so influential.'

Such is the Prince's belief in the natural world that he believes in climate change despite not comprehending it, Singh said.

'Whatever the evidence he would be in favour of combating climate change,' he said. 'But if there wasn't evidence he wouldn't change his mind, I believe.'

'I'm sure he doesn't understand the science behind it.'

The Prince is well known for his support of alternative medicine and his campaign to try to combat climate change. He has also spoken out against the development of genetically modified crops.

Singh blames the growing alternative medicine industry partially on celebrity endorsements, including the Prince.

During his talk he was particularly scathing about the benefits of homeopathy - where active ingredients believed to fight illness are diluted so much that they are not present in the final medicine.

He demonstrated his scepticism by taking a handful of homeopathic insomnia pills on stage.

'You'll fall asleep before I do,' he joked to the audience, before railing against alternative medicine practitioners

for effectively hoodwinking their patients by giving them 'sugar pills'.

He also attacked the BBC for screening a documentary in 2006 which showed footage of a woman in China undergoing a major operation using acupuncture instead of a general anaesthetic.

It later emerged that the patient had been treated with three major sedatives plus a large amount of local anaesthetic as well as undergoing acupuncture.

Singh is campaigning for alternative medicines to be more fully labelled so that patients can be properly informed about their limited benefits.

Patients have the right to seek natural alternatives to drugs, he said, provided they had been shown the evidence.

He cited the example of Steve Jobs, the Apple founder, who when he was first diagnosed with cancer had ignored medical advice to have surgery and chose to combat it through his diet.

'Jobs had been proved right through his career and had spent his life being told he was wrong and that his devices wouldn't work,' he said.

His conviction he was right probably led him to ignore conventional medicine, he said. Jobs died earlier this year, eight years after he was first diagnosed.

Last year Singh won a court battle with the British Chiropractic Association, who sued him after he accused them of misleading patients over the range of conditions they could treat.

He is now campaigning for a reform of the libel laws and warned yesterday that free debate on scientific issues is being stifled by the fear of legal action.

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