

# Secular Medical Forum rebukes NHS for advertising £22,000 spiritual healing job

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Doctor Antony Lempert of the Secular Medical Forum (SMF) has strongly criticised an NHS Trust for advertising a "Spiritual Healer" post to work with breast cancer patients.

The advertisement from the Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust says: "The therapist will provide Reiki/Spiritual healing to patients to enable them to cope with the emotional, physical and spiritual issues of dealing with their cancer journey."

"Epping Breast Unit is one of the largest breast cancer research facilities north of London. The unit takes [a] holistic approach to patient care."

To apply for the role applicants must have a "Reiki Master Usui System qualification".

Dr. Lempert said: "To suggest, as this advert clearly does, that spiritual healing has a place in the mainstream care of breast cancer patients is misguided."

"Should patients wish to access spiritual healing then good luck to them. There are plenty of private facilities where people can access all manner of non-evidence-based complementary therapies such as this. Some people facing cancer may feel better for using complementary therapies, though the risk is that people desperate for a 'cure' will end up chasing costly shadows."

"For the cash-strapped NHS to employ a dedicated spiritual healer is a step in the wrong direction and the resources could be much better spent."

"That an NHS trust might consider it acceptable to employ NHS staff on the basis of religious or spiritual belief or practice may reflect the confusion caused by the existing NHS chaplaincy situation. All NHS-employed hospital chaplains come from a recognised faith community. The NHS should instead be offering high quality evidence-based treatments and support which don't presuppose a belief in one or other faith or version of spirituality."

The SMF "campaigns for a secular approach to current major health issues".

It was reported this month that NHS trusts in England have a deficit of nearly £1 billion, accumulated in just three months.

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