

# 'Quack Buster' busted Dr. Stephen Barrett

For years, Stephen Barrett, self-appointed "quack buster," has directed many of his most venomous attacks at chiropractic. He has used print and broadcast media -- as well as the Internet -- in an attempt to do what the American Medical Association failed to do during their anti-chiropractic campaign: destroy and contain chiropractic.

When faced with criticism of his own closed-mindedness or vindictiveness, Barrett has had a reputation for threatening lawsuits to silence his detractors.

However, in what's been called a landmark free speech decision, a judge in Northern California has thrown out a defamation lawsuit against a San Diego woman who called Barrett a "quack" on her own Internet discussion group.

Alameda County Superior Court Judge James A. Richman has ordered Barrett to pay the woman's legal fees, stating, "Boundaries of permissible public discourse have evolved significantly in the last half-century."

Barrett, a former psychiatrist who holds no current medical license, is one of the most vocal opponents of non-medical health care and his "Quackwatch" website, launched in 1996, is frequently cited in anti-chiropractic media reports.

The defendant, Ilana Rosenthal, has a website that serves as a support group for women who have had problems with breast implants. In online discussions, she has called Barrett an arrogant quack, and stated that he was a "bully" who tried to "extort" her, and that "Quackwatch appears to be a power-hungry, misguided bunch of pseudoscientific socialistic bigots."

Barrett tried to shut her up by slapping her with a lawsuit for defamation and libel, but the judge threw the case out since, he stated, Barrett was a public figure and the online discussion was protected by the Constitution's right to free speech.

The ruling came on July 25, just two days after New Century Press filed a RICO (racketeering) lawsuit against Barrett and his fellow "Quackbusters."

The lawsuit charges Stephen Barrett, his wife Judith Barrett, with "Unlawful, Unfair, and Fraudulent Business Practices ... Violation of Civil Rights, Intentional Interference With Prospective Advantage, Negligent Interference With Prospective Advantage, Civil Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO), Malicious Prosecution, Abuse of Process, Negligence, (and) Civil Conspiracy."

Also named in the suit are many of Barrett's business enterprises and associates -- including Terry Polevoy (of Canada), Christopher Grell, Quackwatch Inc., Quackwatch.com, Lehigh Valley Committee Against Health Fraud, the National Council Against Health Fraud Inc., NCAHF, Healthwatchers.net, the Georgia Council Against Health Fraud, Rebecca Long, Rebekah Johnson, Scotsoft Research, ssr.com, hcr.org, Aron Primack, Peter W. Pappas, Joseph Pizzorno, Robert S. Baratz M.D., William T. Jarvis, Tim Gorski, John Stone, Bill Ross, Peter Bowditch, Monica Pignotti, Paul Lee, Michael McNeil, Paul Hilling, J.A. Lyons, Paul Smith, QUACKBUSTERSOFTHEILLUMUNATTI, Esther Figueroa, Jose Figueroa, and others.

The suit asserts that, "Without any basis or clinical research of their own, Dr. Barrett (a de-licensed psychiatrist) and Dr. Polevoy (an acne care physician), and each of the Cross-Defendants, have focused their unqualified attack on the scientific findings of Dr. Clark. Applying

their obviously limited scientific understanding of microbiology and parasitology, they minimize the significance of Dr. Clark's work by addressing only one form of parasite that they believe is the entirety of her findings. It is almost as if they picked up one of Dr. Clark's books and read the middle page and nothing else, then decided they are experts in the field of parasitology."

Dr. Clark's attorney's also noted, in the legal action, that Barrett and his cohorts "have used the internet as their national pulpit by which they preach the exclusive validity of allopathic medicine to their cult-like followers. Their dogmatic medical mantras are laced with character assassinations and demagoguery to advance their own personal agenda and those of other executioners for traditional medicine."

In a statement applauded by alternative health care advocates around the world, the Health Freedom Legal Defense Council, which represents Clark, explained the reason for their lawsuit: "Recently, countless supporters of Dr. Clark became fed up with the ongoing flood of internet medical narcissism and decided to break their silence and defend the alternative point of view. In essence, the alternative health community has exercised their right of free speech against the narrow-minded prophecies of the QUACKBUSTERS. This, not surprisingly, has infuriated Dr. Barrett and Dr. Polevoy and the many persons and/or entities that follow them. As is typical of self-deputized vigilantes, Dr. Barrett and his supporters believe that the protections of the First Amendment only apply to them."

The suit asks the court for a permanent injunction, to prevent all the defendants from engaging in the "improper and unlawful conduct" described in the legal document. It also calls for general and compensatory damages, which they put at \$10 million.