

# Preacher warned over healing claims on city visit

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An American televangelist who insists he can cure cancer could face prosecution if he makes unsubstantiated claims over his alleged powers during a visit to Scotland next month.

Oklahoma-based preacher Richard Roberts has claimed he has already healed as many as 100,000 cancer sufferers around the world and is due to host a healing session in a Glasgow evangelical church where he will tell seriously ill people to "expect miracles".

It is expected that those in the congregation of the Destiny Church in the city's Shawlands area will also be asked for financial "offerings", although the event itself is free.

But cancer experts have claimed Mr Roberts would be giving very vulnerable individuals false hopes of a recovery, with his claims branded cruel and damaging.

Glasgow City Council's trading standards unit is monitoring the situation. A spokesman said: "If Mr Roberts, or anyone else, advertises or promises a cure for cancer then he is likely to be in breach of consumer protection regulations.

"Anyone advertising a product, which includes a service, must be able to deliver."

Professor Jim Cassidy, head of Glasgow University's Centre for Oncology, said that cancer victims often clutched at straws and that the event could be potentially damaging to them.

He added: "It would be interesting to challenge the legality of these claims. The idea that this individual can cure your cancer is quite cruel. I'd be keen to find out if there was a way of stopping such a thing."

Terry Sanderson, of the National Secular Society, added: "Telling people they are cured when they are not is downright dangerous as well as being exploitative. We shall be keeping a very close eye on Mr Roberts during his time in the UK and challenging each and every unsubstantiated claim he makes."

Mr Roberts has recently been forced to give up his post as president of a US college amid claims he abused his position and spent the institutions funds.

The board of Oral Roberts University in Oklahoma passed a vote of no confidence in him after it was alleged he used college money to buy a fleet of expensive cars, keep horses, convert a study into a wardrobe for his wife's designer clothes, employed academics to do his children's homework, and used the university jet to fly his daughter to the Caribbean.

A UK spokesman for Richard Roberts said: "I have been at services where the crippled have walked, the blind have seen and the deaf have heard. But there is no guarantee that everyone who attends will be cured, it just depends on that night."

A spokeswoman for Destiny Church in Glasgow said they had total faith in Mr Roberts as a man of probity and proven healing ability.

She said: "Richard Roberts is not some wacky kind of preacher. I know when you watch some stuff on TV it can be a bit wacky, but he is really sound. People who are seriously ill and are suffering from cancer should definitely come along."