

Organisation offering alternative cancer therapies to wind up after charity regulator questioned its public benefit

[Gerson Support Group](#) was registered as a charity in 1997 to relieve sickness and to preserve and promote good health by providing support to cancer patients. The charity also aimed to advance public education in the “Gerson nutritional therapy”, based on a specific organic vegetarian diet, nutritional supplements and enemas.

In September 2019, the regulator opened a case to examine how the organisation fulfilled these purposes in practice, including seeking information from its trustees, and reviewing publicly available information about Gerson nutritional therapy.

This case was conducted and concluded in the period after the [Commission’s 2018 review](#), which updated the regulator’s approach to assessing the charitable status of organisations offering complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies. [The review concluded](#) that to satisfy the ‘public benefit’ requirement and qualify for charitable status, organisations must provide evidence that the therapy being offered is capable of delivering the claimed benefits. CAM organisations that claim a therapy can cure a particular condition therefore need to provide objective scientific evidence for their claims. This contrasts with those focussing on offering comfort and relief to patients, which may be able to rely on other types of evidence, such as patient reported outcomes, to demonstrate their public benefit.

In assessing Gerson Support Group, the regulator identified concerns about the extent to which it was providing public benefit. In response to the Commission’s concerns, the organisation’s trustees acknowledged that the evidence around Gerson nutritional therapy, and its claims to treat cancer and its symptoms, would not now meet the Commission’s criteria for registration as a charity.

The trustees are now in the process of winding the charity up and have applied its outstanding funds to other charitable organisations.

Helen Earner, Director of Regulatory Services for the Commission, said:

I welcome the decision by the trustees of Gerson Support Group to wind it up, having recognised our concerns regarding its claims to cure people from life-threatening diseases.

Charitable status is a special status that comes with clear expectations and responsibilities. The law is clear that all

organisations which wish to hold that status must demonstrate public benefit.

It is right that, following the Commission's intervention, the organisation has been removed from the register of charities.

Gerson Support Group has now been removed from the register of charities.

In a [blog published today Helen Earner](#) explains the Charity Commission's wider approach to regulating organisations offering complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.