

Two British women who have become the unwitting stars of a campaign to derail Barack Obama's healthcare reforms yesterday said that their views on the NHS had been misrepresented.

Katie Brickell and Kate Spall said that they strongly supported state-funded healthcare, but their descriptions of poor treatment at the hands of the NHS form the centrepiece of an advertising campaign against the proposed reforms in America. Both appear in adverts for Conservatives for Patients' Rights (CPR), a lobby group that opposes Mr Obama's plans for universal medical insurance, which have caused a transatlantic rift over the merits of the NHS.

Government ministers and the Prime Minister have weighed in to the row to defend the healthcare service as Republicans claimed that adopting an NHS-style system would lead to "death panels" that would preside over who received lifesaving treatment.

My point was not that the NHS shouldn't exist or that it was a bad thing. I think that our health service is not perfect but to get better it needs more public money, not less. I didn't realise it was having such a political impact. I did sign a piece of paper saying they could do what they wanted, so it's my own fault."

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