

WARNING AS GOVERNMENT PAVES THE WAY FOR LASER TREATMENT “COWBOYS”

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Government plans to deregulate cosmetic laser treatment - popular in beauty salons and clinics across the UK - have met with fierce opposition from lawyers and surgeons who deal with those burned and scarred when treatment goes wrong.

The Department of Health proposal will remove safeguards currently in place for people undergoing the treatment for hair removal or removal of fine veins, and place responsibility on the customer to investigate the practitioner's skills, training and qualifications. Denise Kitchener, chief executive of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) said the move will almost certainly mean more people will be injured by unqualified and incompetent operators.

“Laser treatment can be a dangerous procedure and if it is carried out by someone unqualified and inexperienced, the results can be devastating,” she said. “We see first hand the kind of injuries caused when the treatment goes wrong – not only can the actual process be excruciatingly painful if it's not administered correctly, it can cause terrible burns and scarring.

“At the moment people can go to clinics or salons registered with the Healthcare Commission but if the Government deregulates, then there is no way for people to distinguish previously regulated companies from rogue operators.”

APIL's call to keep the current regulations in place is echoed by the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS). David Gault, a consultant plastic surgeon and member of the organisation, says over the past year he has seen an increase in the number of people who have been injured as a

result of laser treatment.

“If any change in regulation is to be made, it should be to control use of lasers more stringently,” he said. “Inappropriate treatment – either with the wrong laser or the right laser on the wrong setting – can result in burns and permanent, disfiguring changes in the skin. The machines involved are powerful tools,” he said, “and their use in the beauty industry does not make them less dangerous, especially in untrained hands.”

Denise Kitchener said there are currently around 3,000* unlicensed, unregulated providers of laser treatment in the UK.

“Deregulating the industry would automatically make all of these legitimate, regardless of whether they are qualified to carry out the procedure.

“It is absolutely unconscionable that the Government recognises more than 3,000* additional people could be injured as a result of deregulation, yet it still wants to go ahead,” she said.

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Note to editors:

- For more information, contact:
Lisa Wardle, Press & PR officer, APIL, t: 0115 9388715
- APIL responded to the Department of Health consultation paper: Private and voluntary healthcare: the Care Standards Act 2000
- *Figure taken from Which? press release: Don't mix sun and laser hair removal in the UK'
- *DoH consultation paper states an additional 1700-3400 people will get hurt as a result of deregulation
- Request for details of case study should be directed to Lisa Wardle

- APIL (Association of Personal Injury Lawyers) was established in 1990 by a group of lawyers working on behalf of personal injury victims and now has more than 5,000 members. APIL campaigns for improvements in the law to help people who are injured or become ill through no fault of their own
- Further information can also be found at the organisation's website - www.apil.org.uk