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## **SAFETY LAWYERS CALL FOR REGULATION OF LASER EYE SURGERY**

People undergoing laser eye surgery are gambling with their sight as they could be treated by doctors without any skills or experience.

The Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) is warning patients that it is imperative to ask the right questions before undergoing laser eye surgery, as the procedure is unregulated. This means it is the patient's responsibility to investigate the practitioner's skills and training, and the only legal demand for doctors is that they are registered with the General Medical Council.

Denise Kitchener, APIL chief executive, said: "The fact the industry is not regulated in any way is shocking, as someone who is inexperienced and has no specific training in this area can perform the surgery. This means there is a huge disparity in the quality of treatment available."

The government's clinical watchdog, The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), says laser eye surgery should not be offered to patients routinely on the NHS, but it is the NHS that often has to pick up the pieces when private surgery goes wrong.

"Many injuries are the result of patients not receiving appropriate counselling, or not being able to see a qualified ophthalmologist before and after the operation," said Denise Kitchener.

"People may not realise the practice is unregulated – it is common place today to see it widely advertised and the assumption would be that it is a safe procedure. While we're sure there are many skilled practitioners, the danger comes from the ones who are not competent."

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Note to editors:

- For more information, contact Michael Johns, Assistant Press & PR Officer, t: 0115 9388702.
- APIL (Association of Personal Injury Lawyers) is a not-for-profit organisation, whose members are dedicated to campaigning 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](http://www.apil.org.uk).
- A Regulation of Laser Eye Surgery Bill failed in parliament in 2006 and has since been shelved. Link: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmbills/028/06028.i.html>
- The Royal College of Ophthalmologists has 'A Patients' Guide to Excimer Laser Refractive Surgery' Link: <http://www.rcophth.ac.uk/docs/publications/patient-info-booklets/ExcimerLaserPatientGuideMarch2006.pdf>