

Horror laser therapy burns prompt regulation calls

Sophie Cousins

Horrific images of burns on a woman's chest from laser therapy have reignited calls for the industry to be regulated.

The injuries, sustained at a beauty salon in Sydney, have experts demanding the introduction of national regulations on the use of IPL and lasers for cosmetic treatments.

Dr Sharron Phillipson, immediate past president of the Australasian Society of Cosmetic Medicine, was the cosmetic physician the patient was referred to for management of the burns.

"It was inappropriate treatment, in a dangerous area," Dr Phillipson, director of the Elizabeth Medical Centre in North Sydney, said.

"The person doing it was young and didn't recognise it was burning and was not capable of managing



The laser industry is currently unregulated

the problem when it occurred."

Currently anyone can buy and operate a laser for cosmetic use in most parts of Australia, with no training or standards in place. Operators have been charging about \$65 per five-minute treatment.

Dr Phillipson, along with medical radiation safety expert Associate Professor Lee Collins from Westmead Hospital, said in a letter to Australian Doctor the industry needed to be regulated.

"The laser industry is currently totally unregulated and strong lasers are put in the hands of untrained and inexperienced personnel," they wrote.

"Without some form of regulation, we will be seeing more young women being burnt by lasers in inexperienced hands."

Professor Collins said while there were a number of responsible cosmetic laser users, there were a significant number who were not.

It is understood the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency — which has been given the task of regulating the industry — has drafted a document that would require some level of training and supervision of IPL or laser therapy.

The Cosmetic Physicians Society of Australasia have also renewed their calls for national regulation to help improve patient safety.

"Anyone can now buy an IPL or laser device and set themselves up without requiring training or insurance. This situation really puts patients at risk," the group's president, Dr Gabrielle Caswell said.

Meanwhile, the safety of liposuction has also come under the spotlight this week, with an inquest underway into the death of a young Adelaide woman a few days after she had the procedure on her thighs and abdomen in 2008.

Dentists join Botox bandwagon

Paul Smith

Dentists are the latest profession under fire for jumping on the Botox bandwagon, with revelations some are administering cosmetic injections despite warnings from the Dental Board of Australia that such work is outside their scope of practice.

The board said it only supported dentists' use of botulinum toxin for the treatment of temporomandibular joint disorder and dysfunction.

But the Australian Academy of Dento-Facial Aesthetics claimed it had trained 150 dentists in the use of

the drug for cosmetic indications — including treatment of wrinkles. The academy's course offering "comprehensive training on dento-facial uses of Botox" costs more than \$1900.

The academy's managing director, Melbourne dentist Dr Myles Holt, said: "We had numerous cases where patients' dentistry was affected by the poor lip enhancements they received from GPs who didn't understand the nuances of smile design."

A communique issued by the dental board this year said: "The opinion of the board is that injection of Botox outside of the [treat-

ment of temporomandibular joint disorder and dysfunction] does not form part of the practice of dentistry. Broader use by dentists, whether trained or not, is not appropriate."

But Dr Holt has called on the board to ditch its rules, claiming it had failed to fully consult with the profession.

The Cosmetic Physicians Society of Australasia accused dentists of "flouting" the rules. President Dr Gabrielle Caswell said: "In the unfortunate event of a compensation claim in a cosmetic medicine case, dentists may not be covered by their professional indemnity insur-

ance, potentially leaving an injured patient without compensation."

She added: "Cosmetic injections are medical procedures that require a physical examination and history-taking, including psychological assessment, for a complete consultation."

But Dr Holt hit back: "Dentists are now the gold standard. I have detailed indemnity insurance covering Botox as do all our members ... I'm not trying to be a cosmetic surgeon — I love being a dentist. I just want to use these materials to enhance the great dental treatment I already provide."

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