

Cosmetic Procedures to be Conducted Only by Registered Medical Practitioners/Registered Dentists

Introduction

In response to a fatal incident in October 2012 involving a beauty service company offering invasive medical procedures, the Government established the Working Group on Differentiation between Medical Procedures and Beauty Services (Working Group) under the Steering Committee on Review of Regulation of Private Healthcare Facilities (Steering Committee) to consider differentiating medical treatments from ordinary beauty services and to make recommendations on the regulatory approach. The Steering Committee has endorsed the recommendations of the Working Group, which included a list of the cosmetic procedures that should only be performed by registered medical practitioners/registered dentists.

Procedures involving injection

These procedures usually involve penetration of the skin by means of a needle with the delivery of chemical substances or drugs. They may involve injections into the different layers of the skin, muscle, or even the blood vessels. As human skin acts as a natural barrier to microorganisms, any procedure that breaches the skin may therefore increase the risk of infection. Other complications associated these procedures include bleeding, haematoma formation, bruising, and scarring.

Examples of these procedures include injection of dermal fillers, botulinum toxin A, skin whitening agents and platelet rich plasma, mesotherapy and injection lipolysis. Needle-free injections of cosmetic substances via the use of jet injectors are also included.



Procedures involving injection should ONLY be conducted by registered medical practitioners.

Mechanical/chemical exfoliation of the skin below the epidermis

Human skin is made up of different layers – i.e. epidermis, dermis, hypodermis or subcutaneous tissue. Skin exfoliation also called skin peeling, involve the removal of tissue of different skin layers by mechanical or chemical means. Mechanical exfoliation is usually achieved by means of an abrasive component such as a jet of fluid or inert crystals. For chemical exfoliation, skin cells are removed by topical application of acid with varying strengths.

The complications associated with these procedures may include bleeding, hyperpigmentation, infection and scarring. In general, the deeper the level of exfoliation, the higher the risk of complications.



Exfoliation of the skin below the epidermis should ONLY be conducted by registered medical practitioners.

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy

This procedure, sometimes marketed under different names such as ‘oxygen chamber’, is actually a form of treatment for medical conditions such as decompression sickness and acute carbon monoxide poisoning. It should not be performed as a form of beauty procedure.

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy is known to be associated with serious complications including barotrauma and oxygen toxicity.



Hyperbaric oxygen therapy should ONLY be conducted by registered medical practitioners/registered dentists on patients with clinical indications.

Dental bleaching or teeth whitening

Dental bleaching is a procedure involving the use of bleaching agents to break down the pigmented compounds in the teeth to achieve teeth whitening. Tooth bleaching materials which are based primarily on hydrogen peroxide may cause irritation of mucous membranes and the gastric tract if the product is swallowed accidentally.

It may also lead to complications such as tooth dentine hypersensitivity, pulpal pain caused by bleaching on undetected caries and defective dental fillings, especially if performed inappropriately or performed on inappropriate clients, such as those suffering from pre-existing dental conditions.



Dental bleaching or teeth whitening should ONLY be conducted by registered dentists.

Know more and think twice before you decide to undergo cosmetic procedures

1. Always request details about the procedure including what equipment and materials will be used
2. Make sure you understand the potential risks and complications associated with the procedure.
3. Request the details of the person who is going to perform the procedure, including his/her name, qualifications, and experience in performing the procedure.
4. If you are referred by a beauty service provider to a doctor to undergo a cosmetic procedure, always request the full name of your doctor in writing. The full list of registered medical practitioners in Hong Kong can be found at the website of the Medical Council of Hong Kong (<http://www.mchk.org.hk/doctor/index.htm>).
5. Beware of questionable marketing tactics and promotion strategies.

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