

Time to speak up: why aesthetic practitioners should make more noise

In a sector that is often likened to the 'Wild West', it is important to not only identify poor and unethical practice, but also report it to the relevant authorities. Following a talk delivered on the state of medical aesthetics, Amy Senior outlines the significant issues the field is facing and suggests quick and efficient ways in which they can help to change the complex landscape of this sector for the future

In April 2017, the Private Independent Aesthetic Practices Association (PIAPA) held its Step Ahead in Aesthetics conference. On this occasion, I took to the stage to present on the worrying climate we are facing in non-surgical aesthetics. In my talk 'Aesthetics in the UK: a perfect storm', I examined how we have come to such a concerning point where a vast portion of the public no longer perceive aesthetic interventions with the respect and gravity they deserve. I also addressed the point that an increasing number of reckless aestheticians, as well as some medical professionals, are administering treatments without fully informing individuals of the risks or acquiring the adequate skills to do so.

To rectify this situation, it is now really important that we start acting individually and not leaning on the shoulders of others to act when we know of bad practice. Power is in numbers and the right authorities need to see complaints increasing in order for them to pay attention. While PIAPA is trying to make movements in the right direction, you also need to make a nuisance of yourselves to encourage the right people to listen.

Evidence, evidence, evidence

Unfortunately, there is no omniscient power collecting all the instances of poor aesthetic practice across the land. There are Facebook groups that have been created to post and discuss specific examples of non-medics' faux pas, but I fear this may have devolved in to a forum to rant rather than record each of these individual instances of bad practice. We must record all instances of illegal or misleading advertisement, malpractice and remote prescribing, because when we finally get the attention of the relevant authorities and someone asks for evidence, you have to be able to locate it. What you want to do is present them with the catalogue of all the

concerning advertisements and pictures you have seen in the last year.

Screenshot anything incriminating the moment you see it. Create a folder on your device for just those photos and do the same on a computer. You can also create a Dropbox storage account—it is free and you can download it as an app and upload any photos you take almost instantly to the device. Record the person/business and the date.

Report unethical advertising

One of biggest ploys of cowboy practitioners is unethical advertising. If you see advertising of a prescription-only medicine like Botox (including made up words, such as 'beautytox') or misleading information, screenshot it. If advertising is on social media, click the tiny arrow on the right hand corner and select 'report post'. Tick the option that says 'this involves drugs, weapons or regulated goods'. It takes less than 1 minute. Make sure you report it to the Advertising Standards Authority (www.asa.org.uk/make-a-complaint.html). To check the advertising codes, go to www.cap.org.uk.

Report remote prescribing

If you are aware remote prescribing is occurring, you must report the responsible doctor, dentist, nurse or pharmacist to their respective council. Provide their name, where they practise and who they are prescribing for, as well as any photo or witness evidence you may have. Make sure you follow up on the actions they take. You can email each of the councils here:

- ▶ Nursing and Midwifery Council: <http://tinyurl.com/l47sc3k>
- ▶ General Medical Council: <http://tinyurl.com/mnvyrg7>
- ▶ General Dental Council: <http://tinyurl.com/m4n6tsf>

- ▶ General Pharmaceutical Council: <http://tinyurl.com/k84djxv>.

Lobby and pressure

If we want regulation, then we must lobby the Government for it, showing the relevant people and authorities the problems that are occurring in the aesthetics sector.

Find your MP on your local authority's website. The best way to get their attention is visit them in their weekly surgeries to discuss the matter face to face. You can also write to them with any concerns and evidence you may have. You may want to state you are aware of the Joint Council of Cosmetic Practitioners (JCCP) and that it is not a regulatory body, but a voluntary register, as some individuals have already had a generic response about this in the first instance.

If we want to cut off prescriptions to non-medics, we must hold pharmacies and suppliers to account. If you are aware of a non-medic receiving products from a certain pharmacy, alert that pharmacy immediately. It should be able to trace the prescriber from the patient name and details, such as product number, if they have them.

If you believe that a pharmacy is not fulfilling its duty to ensure drugs are being procured and administered by an appropriate person under the right supervision, you can discuss this with the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority by contacting them on the following email address: complaints@pmcpa.org.uk. 



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