

Cosmetic Industry Exposé

In her ITV documentary Face to Face earlier this month, Leslie Ash - once a tabloid sweetheart but more recently famous for a lip filler treatment that went disastrously wrong - examined the rapidly growing cosmetic beauty industry and discovered a shocking lack of regulation, which she believes should serve as a warning to anyone considering treatment.

In the programme, Ash discovered the procedure that caused what tabloids termed her 'trout pout', went wrong because of a mistake made by her practitioner: A material similar to silicone was injected into her lips too deeply - it permeated through the thickness of the lip and is now stuck underneath the skin, within the muscles. Unfortunately for Ash, nothing can be done to reverse this procedure.

Injectables like botox and fillers are drugs with serious implications. Used correctly, they can transform lives: Alongside medical uses such as the correction of facial ticks, botox can iron out unwanted wrinkles and frown lines.

Fillers are equally powerful - used for sculpting features after facial surgery or to correct facial deformities, they are popular in the

cosmetic beauty industry for plumping facial lines to give a more youthful glow.

At present, the industry is poorly regulated and despite the potential dangers of cosmetic fillers, they are not classed as requiring a prescription. This means anybody, as long as they attend the correct courses, can become 'qualified' to inject them - they need no medical experience.

In fact, the industry has grown in recent years particularly amongst hairdressers and beauticians. Even in Los Angeles,

where cosmetic procedures are commonplace, there are tighter regulations than here in the UK. Most American states insist that practitioners are medically qualified to inject.

In Face to Face, Ash visited a man offering training to beauty therapists - not doctors or other medical professionals - to carry out botox injections.

In just one day, beauticians were trained to inject people and, if they also had an NVQ level three certificate in Beauty Therapy, they were able to get the insurance needed to carry out the injections.

Sally Taber, of the Independent Health Care Advisory Service (appointed by the Government to draw up standards on how the cosmetic injectable industry should operate) said, "It's not advised that beauty therapists carry out injectables. They don't have the right background. You can teach somebody to give an injection but if something goes wrong then I think it is the doctors, registered nurses and dentists that have that required training."

Dr Anthony O'Neill from Suffolk Medical Clinic in Boxford couldn't agree more: "We see people on a daily basis whose lives have been transformed by cosmetic procedures but this is a serious business and I would urge people to use a reputable practice - preferably one, like our clinic in Boxford, that is Healthcare Commission Registered".

Jenny O'Neill (Registered Nurse) who works alongside her husband at the Boxford practise finds it shocking that the industry is so poorly regulated in this country.

Jenny says, "It makes me shudder to think that there are people out there in the community who have little or



Leslie Ash

no idea about dermatology, the musculature of the face or indeed about simple bedside manner, yet who are regularly injecting people's faces in cosmetic procedures".

Ash concluded her documentary last night by saying she would consider more cosmetic treatments in the future but that she would do her research and chose her practitioner very carefully next time. Watch this space...

If you are considering a cosmetic treatment and would like some free, impartial advice, contact Suffolk Medical Clinic on 01787 211 000 or visit www.suffolkmedicalclinic.co.uk.