

Plastic Surgery Societies Raise Concerns About Cosmetic Procedures Performed by Unqualified Personnel

Non-clinical settings may expose patients to unnecessary risks

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New York, NY and Arlington Heights, IL – The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS) and the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) have joined forces to raise awareness about the dangers of unlicensed personnel performing medical cosmetic procedures in non-clinical settings. Recent cases of patients receiving BOTOX® and tissue fillers at shopping malls, beauty salons or in their homes by individuals without sufficient training or licensure caused concerns among clinical and public health experts. Cosmetic procedures, including tissue filler injections, laser therapies, chemical peels and skin resurfacing, should only be done under the care of properly credentialed and trained medical professionals using only products approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

“There are some misconceptions among patients about the true nature of non-surgical cosmetic procedures. Non-surgical does not mean non-medical,” said Mark Jewell, MD, president of the Aesthetic Society. “Patients deserve to know who is treating them, what their qualifications are, who the supervising physician is, and where the product is coming from. These are questions patients should ask.”

Over the last few years, there has been explosive growth in non-surgical cosmetic procedures, often performed in retail or spa-like settings. Unlike physician offices where clinicians oversee the treatment and maintain medical records, spa-type centers may have limited or no full-time medical staff and may lack the experience or training to handle more than routine beauty services. Patients need assurances that a qualified and trained practitioner will perform their procedure appropriately, under sanitary conditions, and with product where the quality and source is known and FDA approved.

“In many situations, physicians appropriately provide oversight for patient care in a variety of medical settings,” said Bruce Cunningham, MD, president of ASPS. “Our concern here is that physician supervision in non-surgical cosmetic procedures may be inadequate or non-existent and that the individuals performing the treatments lack adequate training to safely perform the procedures. Our purpose in convening a patient safety group on this issue is to ensure that patients have the information they need to make the right decision. While spas and salons are convenient for cosmetic medical treatments, this should not be at the expense of safety and expertise.”

The Societies will continue to be vocal advocates for patient safety as it relates to these procedures and work collaboratively with other medical societies, allied health professionals, and industry to raise awareness of the dangers of such procedures being performed by unqualified or untrained professionals. A Joint ASPS and ASAPS Advisory on Injectables and Fillers: Legal and Regulatory Risk Management Issues, released last year, underscores the two societies’ position: “The administration of injectables and fillers is a medical procedure and is subject to the same precautions of any medical procedure... It is the physician’s responsibility to ensure that the non-physician administering the injectables or fillers possesses the proper education and training.” The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery is the leading organization of board-certified plastic surgeons specializing in cosmetic plastic surgery. ASAPS active-member plastic surgeons are certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

About ASPS

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons is the largest organization of board-certified plastic surgeons in the world. Representing more than 7,000 physician members, the Society is recognized as a leading authority and information source on cosmetic and reconstructive plastic surgery. ASPS comprises more than 94 percent of all board-certified plastic surgeons in the United States. Founded in 1931, the Society represents physicians certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery or The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

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