

DEBATE

CPCA calls for laser regulatory change

The CPCA says there needs to be tighter rules for just who is able to carry out laser treatments.



by **Kerrie Simon**

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The Cosmetic Physicians College of Australasia (CPCA) has long been an avid advocate for patient safety, especially with regards to unregulated laser use in Australia. For many years, the CPCA has been lobbying industry bodies about this very subject with the aim that uniform, national laser regulation be introduced.

Currently the regulations governing the use of lasers among states and territories vary significantly, ranging from minimal state regulations to none at all. While Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia have some form of regulation, with Queensland's being the strictest, our two most populated cities, Sydney and Melbourne, have no regulation at all. However, as CPCA President, Dr Michael Molton points out, even in the states where regulation exists, the actual enforcement of those regulations is often lacking.

“In Australia, there are a wide range of practitioners performing cosmetic medicine procedures, with different degrees of training and experience, education and understanding and unfortunately, this means there is a wide discrepancy in skill levels and the undertaking of responsibility,” said Dr Molton.

Registered healthcare professionals are tightly bound by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) that enforce strict standards of advertising and procedure. Those that are not governed by the same regulations, such as the type of non- medical personnel highlighted in last night's program, have the freedom to advertise and effectively lure members of the public in a more enticing manner, without having to disclose their level of training and expertise.

As with all technology, performing laser treatments in a manner that ensures patient safety involves a steep learning curve. “At this time, all that's required is adequate money to purchase the laser device and set-up shop. The CPCA believes this is incubating an environment where untrained operators are in fact, experimenting on unsuspecting members of the public, while they hone their skills,” says Dr Molten. “The patient visits a practitioner in good faith, and they have every right to believe they are being treated by an experienced professional,” said Dr Molton.

Moving forward, the CPCA aims to work together with industry bodies in a collaborative manner to lobby for the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) to act quickly on this matter, as national regulation and enforcement of these regulations is well overdue. Far too many people have suffered pain, burns and permanent scarring as a result of government inaction.

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