

A booming market: the rise of facial aesthetics

How can dentists stay on top of an unregulated cosmetic industry while keeping their business afloat? Carlotta Eden speaks to **Ashton Collins** about a facial aesthetics market predicted to flourish

Recently, the *Mail Online* ran a piece on the dangers of dermal fillers. Despite the initial confusion (the article struggles to identify the difference between Botox and dermal fillers), it brought to light the ‘catastrophic’ results of dermal fillers gone wrong.

In the article Professor Jean Carruthers claims that ‘98 patients worldwide had lost vision in one or both eyes after being injected with dermal fillers in the face’ – a rare but profound complication brought on when fillers are mistakenly injected into a blood vessel (Parry and Adams, 2015). Dermal filler blindness is likely to be irreversible, and extremely traumatic, both for the patient and the practitioner.

The media’s portrayal of cosmetic

treatments goes one of two ways – either with an array of horror stories on botched procedures and permanent disfigurements, or magazines and newspapers printing photos of celebrities with photo-perfect bodies, lips and hips. It can create an unrealistic attitude to have towards cosmetic treatments: you’ll either look like a model or a monster.

A large part of the blame rests with the lack of regulation in the field, claims Ashton Collins, director of accreditation company Save Face; anyone can inject

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dermal fillers under the law in the UK.

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Ashton Collins, one of the directors of Save Face

industry is almost entirely unregulated.’

So, what’s to stop non-medically qualified persons from doing exactly that? And how can dentists with the appropriate training in facial aesthetics ensure that their qualifications are recognised by patients? We’re on a mission to find out.

Wild, wild west

It’s hard to defend non-surgical cosmetic procedures when the results are often associated with frozen expressions and puffed-up lips. A comment underneath that *Mail Online* article from a reader states: ‘Look at all these celebrities – they look like they have been hit by lightning with their asymmetrical eyes and mouths.’

Despite the bad publicity and ‘minefield of myths, scandals, [and] scare stories’, Ashton believes that the industry has continued to soar year on year. But she adds that the lack of regulation mean it’s becoming ‘a bit like the wild west’.

‘Some medical professionals who have been in the industry for a long time believe that patients should check with the General

Grow your aesthetic business

- Understand your existing demographic and establish whether or not there is a desire for the treatments you offer, then begin the appropriate training. ‘We found that a lot of dentists struggle once they’ve been trained as they don’t know how to advertise properly,’ says Ashton. ‘They end up not treating anyone for a while and then lose the clinical confidence. It’s important to keep the momentum going’
- Fully train your front-of-house staff, practice manager – whoever it might be that’s working your enquiries and taking the patient through a consumer journey; understand the motivators patients go through for wanting treatment
- Ensure your marketing and advertising is excellent. Attract the clients you want; most dentists already have a ready made database of prime candidates. ‘This is a great opportunity to attract men to cosmetic procedures,’ Ashton says. ‘They’re with your practice already, and they may not necessarily want anybody to know they’re seeking cosmetic treatment.’

Medical Council, the General Dental Council and Nursing and Midwifery Council registers to find a trustworthy practitioner,' she says. 'But this presents a number of problems, not least that people just don't know that these organisations exist. On top of that, they don't actually tell you who's been trained in facial aesthetics; there's just no special procedures register for any of those treatments.'

Hence, Ashton's decision to start Save Face – a company specialising in helping prospective patients find accredited facial aesthetics providers, bringing patients (and business) to cosmetic practitioners – with her partner Brett Collins.

Both Ashton and Brett worked at a health and safety company before setting up their own business.

Ashton dealt with the marketing side, developing a hugely successful health and safety based accreditation scheme. Brett initially worked within a sales and marketing capacity for blue-chip corporate organisations – both brought a range of business and marketing expertise to their roles as directors of Save Face.

So, where did the interest in the cosmetic industry come from? Ashton notes: 'After reading a peer review of the industry (*Review of the Regulation of Cosmetic Interventions* by Sir Bruce Keogh) I became quite alarmed by how unregulated it actually was, and as a woman with an interest in beauty and fashion I wasn't aware that there is nothing to protect you if you are seeking these sorts of treatments.'

'I realised quite quickly that the accreditation schemes we were running could be transferred to this sector, making it a much safer place for somebody seeking cosmetic treatment.'

Ashton and Brett also decided to bring Emma Davies on board, a nurse specialising in cosmetic medicine since 1998, as the company's clinical director. 'We both recognised that neither of us were clinically qualified, which is why we wanted to work with Emma who's been in the industry for 17 years championing for better standards,' explains Ashton. 'She's got a really good understanding of the clinical aspects of treatments and running her own practice, as well as knowledge of the political arena surrounding these treatments.'

Ashton hopes Save Face will become the only safe destination for people who are selecting non-surgical cosmetic treatments. The company even joined forces with BBC5 Live on its *Investigate* programme to expose a bogus nurse caught providing Botox and



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dermal fillers when she wasn't registered.

Big business

On a day-to-day basis, Save Face ensures a smooth process for people searching for accredited, trustworthy practitioners to undertake cosmetic treatment. The company's user-friendly and multifaceted search engine allows patients to search, compare and rate accredited practitioners. Ashton explains: 'Generally we support patients and practitioners every day. We have a lot of patients call in who have had a bad experience elsewhere and have nowhere else to turn. They come to us for advice and guidance on a number of issues and for redress following various complications.'

'For practitioners, some of them are new to the industry and are looking for business and clinical support. They don't know the first step to setting up a clinic, how to get a client base going. We help with all of those different things.'

If a practitioner wants to get involved with Save Face or become an accredited member, Ashton and Brett 'first and foremost' check

the person is who they say they are. Both ensure that practitioners have the relevant qualifications and have been trained in every treatment that they provide, with a certificate to evidence that. They have to be insured, Ashton says, working in a clinical environment that has all the right policies and procedures in place.

'We visit each and every one of our practitioners to make sure they use safe products, that their environment is safe and hygienic and that they are operating to a safe set of standards,' Ashton enthuses. 'Those sorts of assurances are really important to a consumer; they want to know they are in safe hands. We provide the service that makes that more accessible.'

Ashton believes an emphasis on 'looking good' is contributing to the growth of interest in non-surgical cosmetic treatment, with eight million injectable treatments administered in the UK each year. She worries procedures get trivialised; the plethora of selfies and social media pressure can take away the seriousness of a cosmetic treatment, leading to patients searching for 'quick fixes' without doing

their full research – or knowing how. Facial aesthetic treatments are almost becoming routine appointments, like waxing or getting your hair done.

‘I think more people are willing to talk about cosmetic treatments now, which is positive,’ she notes. ‘It’s when people forget they are essentially undertaking a medical procedure, and see Botox and fillers as more of an add-on to anti-ageing products and creams, that’s when it becomes dangerous.’

In the same way, when practitioners don’t

good treatment outcomes the first and every time, and they can offer discreet services for people who don’t necessarily want others to know they’re having ‘work’ done.

Ashton continues: ‘Nurses and doctors don’t have that same clinical environment or access to patients, so they really struggle to build up a client base. If dentists market it correctly, they can really hit the ground running.’

She elaborates by revealing that out of the 300 clients on their register at the moment,

With an industry that’s only going to get bigger from here on out (Ashon believes it’s set to grow by a billion pounds by the end of the year), it may be time to get the ball rolling.

Bright future

Quality non-surgical cosmetic treatments are expensive, and as such, patients receiving them have the right to expect a quality service in an appropriate environment.

‘Botulinum toxin injections should never be administered at a party, in a hotel room, at a shop or at home,’ says Ashton. ‘All patients, when researching and receiving these treatments, should expect to be treated with respect; be kept fully informed; and to be given time, care and attention throughout the entire experience.’

Save Face wants to take the ‘guesswork’ out of selecting a non-surgical cosmetic practitioner. ‘We know what to check and how to check it,’ Ashton emphasises. ‘All of the practitioners on the Save Face search engine have been individually assessed on-site against a stringent set of standards by a Save Face clinical assessor.’

Hopefully, with businesses like Save Face and more and more dentists and practitioners getting involved in facial aesthetics, the number of stories of botched procedures will vanish, and positive treatment outcomes will become the norm. Having Botox won’t be considered dangerous or embarrassing to admit to your friends and family.

And when that day comes, dentists will be at the forefront of that change.

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‘Dentists have a thorough understanding of the facial anatomy, which makes them better placed to deliver good treatment outcomes the first and every time, and they can offer discreet services for people who don’t necessarily want others to know they’re having “work” done’

invest in research, training, the environment they work in, care standards and protection should things go wrong, that’s when things become an accident waiting to happen. There are risks involved in non-surgical cosmetic procedures, and without the necessary safeguards in place, side effects and complications are more likely to occur.

But with the right systems in place, with certified qualifications and with the support and service available to practitioners and patients, facial aesthetics will boom.

A dentist’s market

‘Facial aesthetics is a huge market,’ Ashton comments. ‘Two in ten people are having or will at some point in their life have a cosmetic procedure.’

Dentists are ideally placed to become successful facial aesthetic practitioners.

As Ashton explains, they’ve got thousands of patients on their books already, many who they see twice a year, every year. They have a thorough understanding of the facial anatomy, which makes them better placed to deliver

around 70-90 are dentists. ‘A lot of dentists offer facial aesthetics, but don’t promote the service very well,’ she points out. ‘So they’re not realising the full potential of what they could be doing.’

Ashton goes on to explain that the key to becoming successful in facial aesthetics rests with the way you approach the business. View it as a separate business, because the patient journey – particularly if the majority of your patients are NHS – will be completely different.

‘They want appointments quickly and they can be high maintenance, so it’s vital to make sure that dentists free their diary to accommodate enquiries and consultations.’

‘The key is to get front-of-house staff fully informed and confident to take people through converting an enquiry to an appointment; the knowledge needs to be there.’

‘Little things like in-house leaflets, patient informational posters, sending emails – this all counts towards successful aesthetic marketing.’

References

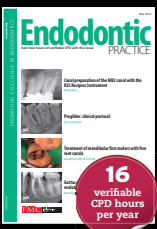
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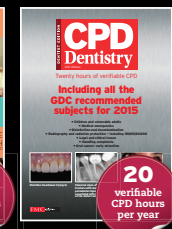
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