

Post-pandemic panic – BAAPS issues a stark warning to the public: “Don’t fall victim to unscrupulous providers selling surgery as a post-lockdown quick fix”

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Unscrupulous cosmetic surgery providers are cashing in on a post-pandemic “Zoom boom” by coercing vulnerable patients into panic buying procedures, warns The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS).

A post-quarantine plastic surgery boom could see vulnerable patients being taken advantage of by unscrupulous providers, that’s the stark warning from The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS) this week.

BAAPS, which is the UK’s only organisation solely dedicated to advancing safety, education, innovation and excellence in cosmetic surgery, is warning the public not to fall prey to unethical marketing tactics which attempt to lure them into “panic buying” plastic surgery as a post-lockdown quick fix, highlighting the dangers of virtual cosmetic surgery consultations.

The association, which reported seeing a “massive upswing” (100%*) in demand for virtual consultations during lockdown, has issued a statement highlighting its concerns following its first Virtual Annual Conference this month, where it launched a new set of Triple Lock Guidelines to help safeguard patients in these challenging times.

While 83% of BAAPS surgeons said they think virtual consultations are a valuable first step in the process, particularly in the current climate, the association has been extremely concerned to find that some cosmetic surgery clinics are not following safety guidelines.

In a survey of 20 non BAAPS cosmetic surgery clinics, 75% did not insist on a face to face consult with an adequate cooling off period and 85% did not insist on a cooling off period at all, despite this being a mandatory requirement of good medical practice by the GMC. Concerningly, some clinics even advocated no face to face with a surgeon before surgery.

The association is cautioning the public not to fall prey to unethical tactics and marketing deals luring them to “panic buy”, as they do not give them the required “cooling off” period of at least 14 days between a face-to-face consultation and the procedure being done.

The recent conference also saw the appointment of the association’s first female President, Mary O’Brien. She commented, "The core values of the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons are safety, education and ethical practice in aesthetic surgery. As our world becomes increasingly virtual in this unusual time, we are being proactive in addressing the challenges that patients face to make sure that high standards are maintained in the delivery of care and information. It's that reality of surgery and aftercare that should not be lost in a virtual world. It's about delivering real care to real people to improve psychological and physical wellbeing. Surgery is not a pandemic pick me up."

Safeguarding patients

Safety and ethical practice are always BAAPS's number one priority and the association believes that safeguarding patients in these challenging times should be a number one priority for all medical professionals. There is also concern that aftercare is being overlooked.

"There is no such thing as virtual aftercare in the event that intervention is needed", says Mary O'Brien. "It's very important when a patient chooses a surgeon, that the hospital is accessible so that high quality postoperative care can be provided. BAAPS has warned against cosmetic surgery tourism for this very reason. The danger of virtual consultations is that the patient may not realise that travelling a long distance for a surgical procedure in the UK can compromise aftercare."

BAAPS Triple Lock Guidelines

"To tackle increasing concerns around safety, BAAPS has published the BAAPS Triple Lock Guidelines to help patients navigate cosmetic surgery in these challenging times." said BAAPS member, Caroline Payne who unveiled the new guidelines:

1. A face-to-face consultation involving a thorough clinical and psychological evaluation is essential before you have surgery. Virtual consultations should only be used as an introduction.
2. Time for reflection, or what is known as a cooling off period is essential for a minimum of 14 days.
3. Aftercare, ensure you have made appropriate provision to access your aftercare.

*BAAP's "Zoom Boom" members survey

100% saw a rise in virtual consultations over lockdown

50% did not offer virtual consultations (VC) before COVID-19

66% will continue to offer VCs

83% say VC converts to a face-to-face

75% of patients then go on to have actual surgery

33% of members saw an increase in men seeking virtual consultations

66% said there was an increase in younger women seeking VC

83% said they felt people would be more cautious about having cosmetic surgery because of Covid-19

For more information or for media comment on this or other topics related to cosmetic surgery please contact lynne@flipsidepr.co.uk or call 07738579999