

As Brits Continue to Risk Their Lives Getting Surgery Abroad, A National Audit Reveals the Problem Is Just the Tip of the Iceberg.

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The number of people needing hospital treatment in the UK after getting cosmetic surgery abroad increased by 94 per cent in three years, with procedures carried out in Turkey accounting for more than three quarters of those in the past six months alone.

New Data compiled by the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons BAAPS (<https://baaps.org.uk>) reveals a growing number of people are returning to the UK with complications ranging from wound healing problems to life-threatening sepsis.

In some cases, since November last year, patients have needed intensive care treatment and several emergency operations - mostly on the NHS.

BAAPS, a charity, which represents plastic surgeons in the UK, has collated the UK's first ever database with the number of corrective procedures carried out in the UK after surgery abroad has gone wrong. Along with the Royal College of Surgeons, BAAPS has also published guidelines (https://baaps.org.uk/media/press_releases/1881/baaps_cosmetic_tourism_update) for its members to adhere to when advising patients undergoing surgery in a different country from their residence.

Since November last year, 78% of the corrective operations carried out in the UK have been on people who had aesthetic procedures in Turkey. In the four years to 2022, 324 patients required surgery once they returned home from countries abroad including Turkey, the Czech Republic and Lithuania.

Previously, the association has estimated the cost to the NHS for each person is around £15,000 - but it stresses this varies significantly depending on the type and the extent of treatment needed.

BAAPS President Marc Pacifico said, "We are only scratching the surface of the true number needing treatment on an already-stretched health service with a record-high waiting list. BAAPS is in discussions with government departments in UK and abroad to see if we can develop pathways through which patients can be treated to relieve the burden on the NHS. One of the other worrying things is that some people are returning with multi resistant bacteria that are hard to treat and may infect other people."

BAAPS is also in discussion with the Advertising Standards Authority to address the misleading adverts suggesting that having cosmetic surgery in Turkey is no different from a holiday in the sun. "Nothing could be further from the truth. Medical advice and support for people looking to go abroad is drowned and dwarfed by the number of paid promotions and glossy advertisements for the cosmetic tourism market itself". says Pacifico.

Several sites also offer prospective patients luxury accommodation before and after cosmetic surgery abroad, while several sell procedures as 'package deals' so customers can undergo more than one operation per visit.

Mr Pacifico added: "We're not trying to stop this, we're in no position to and nor is this what we're aiming for. We're aiming to try and raise awareness, increase safety, ultimately protect patients but

also relieve the burden on the NHS."

Recently BAAPS and TSPRAS, the Turkish Society of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons, came together to draw up some advice and guidance

(https://baaps.org.uk/media/press_releases/1876/as_complications_from_cosmetic_tourism_rise_uk_and_turkish_plastic_surgery) patients seeking surgery in Turkey. BAAPS has also drawn up guidelines for its own members because it recognises that there will always be patients from different countries who will seek aesthetic medical and surgical treatments abroad, both patients coming to the UK and those from the UK travelling for surgery elsewhere.

The aim of this guidance is to help to protect patients from harm and ensure that they are aware of standards of care both before and after surgery, that they should expect as a minimum.

"We hope that by working with TSPRAS and by drawing up guidelines for our own members, we can work towards better protection and guidance for the public" Pacifico said.

For all media enquiries, please contact pr@baaps.org.uk

About the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons

The BAAPS (www.baaps.org.uk), based at the Royal College of Surgeons, is a not-for-profit organisation, established for the advancement of education and practice of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery for public benefit. Members undergo thorough background screening before they can join. Information about specific procedures and surgeons' contact details can be found on the website, or by contacting their office at 020 7430 1840. Further materials can be posted to members of the public seeking specialised information.