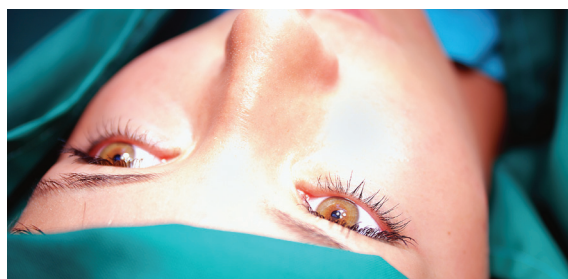


DANGERS OF 'HIGH-STREET' COSMETIC SURGERY EXPOSED

Numerous patients are emerging from expensive cosmetic surgeries with unsatisfactory results, health complications or traumatic experiences – so what should we look out for when shopping around for a plastic surgeon, asks *Claire Saunders*?



Cosmetic surgery has been one of the few industries to have bucked the trend during the recent recession, growing by roughly a fifth in two years. However, recent statistics have revealed that up to 75 per cent of cosmetic surgery clinics are unregulated, potentially harming unknowing patients.

The report, carried out by The National Confidential Enquiry into Patient Outcome and Death (NCEPOD), an independent Whitehall-funded body which aims to improve medical care, showed that many companies offering cosmetic procedures such as face lifts, breast enlargement and liposuction, are not following basic safety guidelines.

In fact, over half the companies approached breached the rules of the Care Quality Commission (CQC), by failing or refusing to fill in the questionnaire. "It's been incredibly difficult to get information about the industry" said Ian Martin, a surgeon and one of the authors. "If we have difficulty finding who is doing what and where, then heaven help patients trying to find out what these facilities are like."

NCEPOD found that numerous cosmetic surgery clinics in the UK offered a large 'menu' of procedures (from nose jobs to liposuction) but in many cases the surgeons were not sufficiently experienced in all the surgeries on offer.

"These figures present a distressing picture, but one which is sadly not surprising to us as they only confirm what we have been saying for years – that there is an absolute need for statutory regulation in this sector," comments Nigel Mercer, president of The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons – a body that only has around a third of the industry as members.

So crucially, patients considering cosmetic procedures need to ensure that they fully research the credentials of any private clinic or hospital they approach for plastic surgery.

The Wellington Plastics Unit (based at HCA private medical group's Wellington Hospital in North West London) boasts an outstanding reputation for excellence in the field of cosmetic surgery, with the finest surgical skills, a high level of diagnostic technology and nursing support. A first class facility, The Wellington Hospital offers outstanding medical care with an international reputation for excellence, results, managing complications and minimising recovery time.

In addition, The Wellington Plastics Unit is equipped with the very latest technology and resources and offering all the facilities necessary for a wide range of operative procedures, this is the most highly recommended choice for those serious about quality of care, precision and skill. With the operating theatres attached to the unit, a specially designed recovery room with full patient monitoring and highly qualified staff, the unit is able to provide for both day surgery and inpatients whatever their chosen procedure.

Remember, if you are considering treatment, independent professional advice from an experienced and qualified surgeon is essential and should include discussion on suitability, results, complications and recovery. The Wellington provides comprehensive and high quality care support for all types of cosmetic surgery.

For more information about cosmetic surgery at The Wellington Plastics Unit, call the Enquiry Helpline on 020 7483 5148 or visit www.thewellingtonplasticsunit.com

- Only **44%** of theatres were properly equipped
- **22%** did not have a resuscitation team on hand at all times
- **32%** do not allow patients a 'cooling off' period to prepare for surgery

On the Face of it: A review of the organisational structures surrounding the practice of cosmetic surgery, NCEPOD

WELLINGTON HOSPITAL CREDENTIALS

The Wellington Hospital is regulated by the Care Quality Commission in accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and inspected regularly against National Minimum Standards (Department of Health 2002). They are accredited by the Health Quality Service (HQS) which is an external accreditation body enabling healthcare organisations to critically examine themselves against a nationally recognised framework of organizational standards.

All consultants at The Wellington Hospital have to apply for Practising Privileges, and show GMC certificate, GMC specialist registration, professional indemnity insurance, CRB clearance and approval by Medical Advisory Committee of The Wellington Hospital.