It’s not all white!
Whitening salon offers raises issue and patient safety

Following an advertisement placed recently on Groupon by Starsmile, a company which offers whitening treatments that are performed by non-dental professionals, the question of patient safety has once again been brought into the limelight.

On their site Starsmile claim they “offer the same professional service and treatment as a dentist but at a fraction of the cost,” they also claim to provide a health check of the patients teeth and provide aftercare; however, they are neither dentists nor dental professionals. During the treatment video that is displayed on the Starsmile website, the ‘technicians’ are constantly in contact with the teeth and mouth; however, although stated as part of their procedure, there was no ‘health check’ either before or after treatment.

In addition to this, Starsmile also claimed how one of the ‘highlights’ of the treatment was that the procedure and the technology were recommended by the British Dental Association.

Further problems begin to emerge as Starsmile make it clear in the FAQ section of its website that tooth whitening is not provided by GDC registrants, saying; “We are not dentists, our teeth whitening procedure is a cosmetic treatment carried out by fully-trained Starsmile technicians.”

In light of the advertisement the BDA wrote to the General Dental Council (GDC) to ask them to take action to ensure patient safety is upheld.

Stuart Johnson, Chair of the BDA’s Representative Body said: “This advert is very concerning in that it encourages the public to get tooth whitening done by non-dental professionals. The GDC’s recent campaign sought to warn the public against tooth whitening being conducted illegally by unregulated persons, and highlighted the fact that the procedure should only be undertaken by a dentist.

The BDA wants patients to feel completely safe and know that they are being treated by a registered professional who is fully trained to undertake this procedure. We’ve called on the GDC to take action on this matter!”

The law currently states that under the Dentists Act 1984 it is an offence for non-registrants to carry out tooth whitening stated; The Council is aware and concerned that tooth whitening is being carried out in a growing number of salons, clinics and shopping centres by non GDC registrants and indeed is being offered to people in their own homes. It is also aware that the standard of treatment being offered is far below that which is required by its registrants. For some time the Council has been exploring different approaches to tackling this problem with a view to ensuring that such procedures are only carried out by regulated individuals and in suitable locations. Given the legal complexities involved, however, this has been a lengthy process.

Dental Tribune was unable to contact Starsmile for their take on the issue.