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

Following an advertisement placed recently on Groupon by Starsmile, a company who are offering 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.

“On the one hand, 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 or to market tooth whitening products to consumers.

The BDA wrote to the General Dental Council to ask them to take action to ensure that such procedures are 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.