

# PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release Thursday 10 July 2008 at 11:00hrs

Contact: Kate Turnbull 0207 770 7582 / [kate.turnbull@which.co.uk](mailto:kate.turnbull@which.co.uk)

## Doctors, patients and industry join the fight against laser de-regulation

Over thirty patient groups, medical bodies, cosmetic clinics and industry representatives\* have joined forces with Which? to oppose Government plans to stop regulating cosmetic laser treatments from 1 October\*\*.

The groups have signed a joint letter to Health Minister Ben Bradshaw MP, calling on him to halt Government plans to remove non-surgical laser treatments, like hair removal and skin treatments, from current healthcare regulation. They believe the Government has underestimated the financial impact of such a change on the NHS, the cosmetic treatment industry and the number of people burned as a result.

The Government has openly stated that cosmetic laser deregulation will cost the NHS an extra £1.8 million a year as well as double the rate of 'adverse incidents' such as people getting burns and skin damage\*\*\*. Which? believes these figures will be much higher\*\*\*\*.

Together the groups believe that the rush to bring in deregulation on 1 October 2008 should be delayed, and alternative statutory schemes should be brought before Parliament.

Jenny Driscoll, Which? health campaigner said:

*"The opposition to this Government plan is across the board. This unique group has joined forces to tell the Minister to seriously take heed of the warnings from patient groups, health experts and the cosmetic industry."*

*"We believe the Government figures underestimate the impact of deregulation. There are concerns that if their plan goes ahead, standards will drop and more people will be harmed, with the NHS left to pick up the bill."*

### NOTES TO EDITORS

Signatories:

Helen McCallum, Director of Policy and Communications, **Which?**; Peter Walsh, Chief Executive, **Action against Medical Accidents**; Godfrey Town, Secretary, **Association of Laser Protection Healthcare Advisers**; Roy Henderson, Chairman, **Association of Laser Safety Professionals**; John Lowry, Chairman, **British Academy of Cosmetic Practice**; Douglas McGeorge, President, **British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons**; Valerie Cooke, Chairman, **British Association of Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology**; Dr John Curran, President, **British Association of Cosmetic Doctors**; Dr Mark Goodfield, President, **British Association of Dermatologists**; A. Roger Green, President, **British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons**; Dr R J Barlow, Chairman, **British Cosmetic Dermatology Group**; Professor Harry Mosely, Honorary President, **British Medical Laser Association**; Sarah Pape, Chairman, **British Skin Laser Study Group**; Andrew Vallance-Owen, Group Medical Director, **BUPA**; Harry Cayton, former Chair, **Expert Group on the Regulation of Cosmetic Surgery**; James Partridge OBE, Chief Executive, **Changing Faces**; Neil Walker, Dermatologist, **Churchill Hospital, Oxford**; Dr Nicholas Lowe, Consultant Dermatologist, **Cranley**

**Clinic and British Cosmetic Dermatology Group**; David Gault, Skin Laser Specialist representative of BAAPS, based at the Royal College of Surgeons; Dr Christopher Rowland Payne, Secretary-General, **European Society for Cosmetic and Aesthetic Dermatology**; Mr Mel Braham, Chairman, **The Harley Medical Group**; Dr Sean Lanigan, Consultant Dermatologist and Clinical Lead of the **Birmingham Regional Skin Laser Centre at City Hospital**; Dr M Robertson, Laser Specialist, **Laserase**; Dr P Dobson, Medical Director and Chartered Radiation Protection Practitioner, **Laser Care Services**; Paul Tozer, Managing Director, **Lasermet**; Paul Stapleton, Managing Director, **Mapperley Park Clinic**; David Brassington, Managing Director, **Renew Medica**; Howard Catton, Head of Policy, **Royal College of Nursing** Andy Randall, Managing Director, **Skin**; Rachel Hawkes, Chair of Board of Trustees, **Verity**; Ella Tracey, Managing Director, **White Light Skin Clinic**

\*\* The Government published its consultation paper on 'Private and Voluntary Health Care: Care Standards Act 2000' in March 2008 which includes partial deregulation of lasers and intense pulsed light sources - Class 3B or Class 4 Laser products and intense pulsed light (IPL)

\*\*\* Source: Department of Health (March 2008) Private and Voluntary Health Care: Care Standards Act 2000, *Appendix A: Deregulation of lasers and lights - possible effect on number of adverse incidents*

\*\*\*\* The Government is assuming the number of providers and the rate of activity will not change, but that there will be a doubling in the rate of adverse events. Which? has used the Government's estimates of activity, and rate and cost of adverse events to show the potential increase in the extra cost to the NHS if there is a rise in the number of providers:

	Number of providers	Total number of treatments p.a. <sup>*</sup>	Adverse events <sup>**</sup>	Cost to NHS of adverse events	Potential extra cost to NHS
Government assessment of current situation:					
	850	340,000	3,400	£1,872,000	-
Government estimate under deregulation:					
	850	340,000	6,800	£3,672,000	£1,872,000
Impact of more providers					
	1000	400,000	8,000	£4,320,000	£2,520,000
	2000	800,000	16,000	£8,640,000	£6,840,000
	3000	1,200,000	24,000	£12,960,000	£11,160,000

<sup>\*</sup> based on Govt estimate of 400 treatments per establishment per year

<sup>\*\*</sup> based on Govt estimate of current adverse event rate of 1% and predicted rate of 2% under deregulation

Which?'s point of view:

- > Which? has submitted a response to the proposals which states that the Government is basing its decision to deregulate laser treatments on an 'inadequate assessment' on the effects of such a move on both consumers and the NHS.
- > Which? would like to see the Government fulfilling its previous commitment to review the industry, as recommended by expert groups and the health regulator.
- > Which? is concerned that the Government is not providing any substitute scheme to monitor the cosmetic laser industry and help people check out clinics.

- > Which? is asking people to get in touch if they have had cosmetic laser treatment. Please visit [www.which.co.uk/cosmetic](http://www.which.co.uk/cosmetic) for more information.

Which? is the leading independent consumer champion in the UK, providing up to date, impartial, expert information on thousands of products and services to help make individuals as powerful as the organisations they have to deal with in their daily lives. To find out more visit [www.which.co.uk](http://www.which.co.uk)