# NHS burdened by surge in cosmetic surgery complications linked to unregulated overseas procedures



The rising tide of complications from cosmetic surgery has become a significant burden on the National Health Service (NHS), as increasing numbers of patients seek corrective procedures for botched operations performed abroad. These troubling trends were underscored during a recent hearing in the House of Commons, convened by the Women and Equalities Committee, where experts highlighted the severe risks associated with cosmetic tourism.

At the forefront of the concerns is the Brazilian butt lift (BBL), a procedure fraught with danger, particularly when carried out by unqualified practitioners in non-medical settings like Airbnbs and hotel rooms. Ashton Collins, director of Save Face, a register of accredited practitioners for cosmetic surgery, voiced her alarm, stating that there exists a "crisis waiting to happen" due to regulatory gaps. Collins emphasised that the commoditisation of cosmetic surgeries, often marketed as 'holiday packages', has exacerbated public misconceptions about their safety. Experts from various medical fields have increasingly called for rigorous oversight, including proposed legislation dubbed 'Alice's Law', named after Alice Webb, the first known UK fatality from a BBL procedure, who tragically died shortly after her surgery in Gloucestershire.

Collins and others highlighted disturbing reports of BBLs being conducted in living rooms, where unregistered practitioners use unregulated substances acquired from dubious sources without quality control. "They are decanting them from huge vats into individual syringes and inject thousands of millilitres," Collins warned, underscoring the perilous state of operations that should only be performed in clinical settings.

This year alone has seen six fatalities linked to cosmetic tourism in Turkey, a country notorious for its low-cost procedures, reflecting a broader international crisis. The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS) has noted a staggering 94% increase in the number of patients requiring hospital treatment in the UK due to complications from surgeries performed abroad over a three-year period. Astonishingly, around half of these individuals express regret over their decisions to undergo such procedures overseas—a sobering statistic that raises alarms about the industry's direction.

Furthermore, the nature of BBLs complicates matters further; surgeons describe them as perilous "blind" procedures that can lead to catastrophic complications, including fatal pulmonary embolisms if fat enters a blood vessel. The very nature of the surgery poses risks deemed so significant that the BAAPS advises against its practice entirely. In light of the alarming statistics, which include 25 fatalities in the United States over the last five years, advocates urge immediate legal reforms to better protect patients.

While Alice Webb's death has generated headlines, it is only the tip of the iceberg in a growing controversy surrounding the unregulated cosmetic surgery industry. Calls for stricter regulations echo throughout the medical community. Professor Vivien Lees, a consultant plastic surgeon and vice president of the Royal College of Surgeons, characterised current policies as inadequate. She described severe complications from cosmetic procedures as a significant contributor to the NHS's workload, particularly stressing that many clinics lack the capacity to address issues arising from their own treatments.

As discussions around patient safety continue to gain momentum, public awareness is catching up to the reality of these risks. The intersection of social media and cosmetic surgery has further complicated the landscape, as platforms abound with advertisements from unqualified practitioners promising miraculous results. Experts caution against the allure of quick fixes without understanding the inherent risks involved.

Looking to the future, the urgency for effective regulation and patient education could not be more critical. The growing evidence and statistics underline the need for an overhaul in how cosmetic surgeries are marketed and performed, potentially saving lives and alleviating the pressures on the NHS.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-14719051/Cosmetic-surgery-patients-burden-NHS-fix-botched-ops.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx2m829lmk9o> - This article reports on the death of Alice Webb, a 33-year-old mother of five, who died after undergoing a non-surgical Brazilian butt lift (BBL) procedure in Gloucestershire, UK. Two individuals have been arrested on suspicion of manslaughter. The piece highlights the risks associated with such cosmetic procedures and the ongoing investigation into the incident.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/sep/26/tributes-to-woman-thought-to-be-first-to-die-from-suspected-brazilian-butt-lift-in-uk> - This article discusses the death of Alice Webb, believed to be the first person in the UK to die following a suspected 'liquid Brazilian butt lift' procedure. It includes tributes from friends and family, details about the procedure, and comments from Save Face, a UK register of accredited cosmetic practitioners, calling for a ban on such procedures.
4. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/crime/brazilian-butt-lift-alice-webb-death-b2619382.html> - This article reports on the death of Alice Webb, a mother of five, after a non-surgical Brazilian butt lift procedure in a UK clinic. It includes details about the procedure, the investigation into her death, and comments from Save Face, a UK register of accredited cosmetic practitioners, calling for a ban on such procedures.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm2yk20g9v2o> - This article reports on calls for Brazilian butt lift (BBL) procedures to be suspended following the death of Alice Webb, a 33-year-old mother of five, who underwent a non-surgical BBL before falling unwell and later died in Gloucestershire, UK. It includes comments from Dr. Simon Opher, a GP and MP for Stroud, urging people not to have BBLs until their safety is confirmed.
6. <https://www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk/news/gloucester-news/mum-dies-liquid-brazilian-butt-9582064> - This article reports on the death of Alice Webb, a 33-year-old mother of five, after a cosmetic procedure went wrong in Gloucester, UK. It includes tributes from friends and family, details about the procedure, and comments from Save Face, a UK register of accredited cosmetic practitioners, calling for a ban on such procedures.
7. <https://baaps.org.uk/media/press_releases/1493/new_data_four_out_of_five_surgeons_record_rise_in_revisions_for_botched_procedures> - This press release from the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS) discusses new data showing that four out of five surgeons have recorded a rise in revisions for botched procedures. It includes comments from BAAPS President Simon Withey and Council member Mary O’Brien on the impact of cosmetic medical tourism and the need for better patient education and regulation.