

CANCER RESEARCH UK BRIEFING

Sunbeds Bill – briefing for Second Stage Debate 25/05/10

Please support the Bill – Cancer Research UK is fully supportive of the measures contained in the Sunbeds Bill and we urge Members to support it.

Overview

This briefing contains:

- (1) Cancer Research UK's position
- (2) The benefits of regulating sunbed use
- (3) Sunbed regulation in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland
- (4) Sunbeds – how dangerous are they?
- (5) Skin cancer statistics
- (6) SunSmart campaign

(1) Cancer Research UK's position on sunbeds

- Cancer Research UK is especially concerned by the use of sunbeds by young people as we know that younger skin is at particular risk. We believe that under-18s should not be permitted to use sunbeds.
- Cancer Research UK supports the banning of unstaffed, coin-operated salons as a matter of priority.
- Cancer Research UK believes that evidence-based health information should be provided in all sunbed salons.
- Cancer Research UK supports the principle of a licensing or registration scheme for salons and other premises offering the use of tanning facilities to members of the public as we believe this could ensure that a number of minimal health, safety and good practice guidelines were met in all tanning facilities. We therefore support the power in the Bill to enable future subordinate legislation to be made requiring sunbed premises to register with District Councils.

(2) The benefits of regulating sunbed use

Cancer Research UK is very concerned by the use of sunbeds, especially by young people, as we know that younger skin is at particular risk.¹ We believe that under-18s should not be permitted to use sunbeds and support the banning of unstaffed, coin-operated salons as a matter of priority. We also believe that sunbed providers should not be able to claim any beneficial effect on health from sunbed use.²

Voluntary regulation of the sunbed industry is currently inconsistent and largely unmonitored, and we believe this places users of all ages at greater risk. Some communications from the industry have marketed unsupported benefits of use for the maintenance of adequate Vitamin D levels and for the maintenance of good health.³ We therefore support calls for a scheme to regulate salons and other premises offering the use of tanning facilities to members of the public.

Cancer Research UK hopes that such measures would help to reverse the current skin cancer epidemic. In addition, we hope that there would be benefits from increased public knowledge of the health risks associated with sunbeds and that this encourages behaviour change. This could translate into financial savings particularly for health services.

We know that protecting children from sunbeds could be very popular: 87 per cent of the UK public believe that under 18 year olds should not use sunbeds, rising to 90 per cent who support sunbed salons being staffed.⁴

(3) Sunbed regulation in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland

Cancer Research UK has also been closely involved with the development of sunbed regulations across the UK.

Scotland

Cancer Research UK successfully lobbied for regulation of the sunbed industry in Scotland, and has worked closely with MSPs, civil servants and other stakeholders to support the introduction of the measures in the Public Health etc. (Scotland) Act. We also worked with the Scottish Government Directorate of Health and Wellbeing to deliver an awareness raising campaign in support of the introduction of regulations in December 2009.

The Public Health etc. (Scotland) Act 2008 took the following measures to better regulate the sunbed industry:

- Prohibition on allowing use of sunbeds by under 18s
- Prohibition on sale or hire of sunbeds to persons under 18
- Prohibition on allowing unsupervised use of sunbeds
- Operator's duty to provide information to sunbed users
- Operator's duty to display information notice
- Power for an authorised officer of a local authority to enter premises
- Fixed penalties for those not complying with the above.

England and Wales

In April 2010 the UK Parliament passed the Sunbeds (Regulation) Act which will prevent under 18s from accessing sunbeds. The Act will come into force in 12 months' time and will cover England and Wales. It gives local enforcement officers powers to inspect salons and to penalise salon operators if under 18s are found to be using sunbeds.⁵

The Act also contains provisions to bring forward regulations to:

- ensure that under 18s are not able to hire or buy sunbeds
- ensure that all sunbed salons are staffed
- ensure that clear, accurate health information is displayed in all salons and other places where sunbeds are being used for commercial purposes. This recognises that whilst adults are free to make their own decisions about sunbed use, they should do so knowing the risks involved
- prevent operators from advertising unsupported benefits of sunbed use
- ensure that adult sunbed users wear protective eye wear when using a sunbed in a commercial setting.



The Act attracted cross-party support during its passage through Westminster. It is hoped that the regulations will be consulted on shortly.

Republic of Ireland

Prohibition of the use of sunbeds by under 18s is under consideration by the Department of Health and Children in the Republic of Ireland. A public consultation was carried out in 2008 and last year the Health Minister reaffirmed her commitment to regulate the sunbed industry.

(4) Sunbeds – how dangerous are they?

Sunbeds have been linked to a variety of poor health conditions including eye damage, photodermatitis, photosensitivity, premature skin ageing and skin cancer.⁶ There is increasing evidence to suggest that the use of sunbeds increases the risk of malignant melanoma, especially in people who find it difficult to tan.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has concluded that there is convincing evidence to support a causal relationship between sunbed use and skin cancer, particularly with exposure before the age of 35 years.⁷ UV-emitting tanning devices have been classified as Group 1 carcinogens by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), which means they are considered carcinogenic to humans.⁸ The UV emissions from many sunbeds are greater than those from the midday sun in the Mediterranean.^{9,10,11} It has been estimated that sunbeds cause 100 deaths from melanomas every year in the UK.¹²

The independent Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) report recommended that Governments take strong action to protect young people from the dangers of using sunbeds.¹³ This included stopping under 18s from using sunbeds, closing down unmanned, coin-operated salons and ensuring that local enforcement officers have powers to inspect salons and check that minimum standards are being met.

We know that sunbed use by young people is a serious problem: research commissioned by Cancer Research UK in 2008/09 found that more than a quarter of a million children have used sunbeds in England.¹⁴ A significant number of 11-17 year olds in Wales have also used sunbeds.¹⁵

(5) Skin cancer statistics

Skin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the UK with over 75,000 new cases reported each year in the UK.

Malignant melanoma is the least common but most serious type of skin cancer, with 10,410 new cases each year in the UK (259 in Northern Ireland in 2006) and claiming 2,042 deaths (55 in Northern Ireland in 2007).

Incidence of melanoma rises steadily with age, so is most common in later life. However, incidence among young people is rising - it is the most common cancer in 15-34 year olds. Over the last 25 years malignant melanoma has seen the largest increase in incidence rates of all major cancers.

Almost one third of all cases of malignant melanoma occur in people under 50 and malignant melanoma is now the most common cancer in young adults (aged 15-34) in the UK. This stark increase in incidence emphasises the importance of prevention and early treatment to avert the potential loss of many years of life. On average, about 20 years of life are lost for each melanoma death.¹⁶

(6) The SunSmart Campaign

Cancer Research UK believes that long-term, nationwide public health education campaigns are vital to initiate the attitudinal and behavioural changes needed to reverse the trend in skin cancers in the UK.

In March 2003, Cancer Research UK and the UK Health Departments launched the national skin cancer prevention campaign called SunSmart. The SunSmart campaign is an integrated public health campaign combining research, public communication, professional support and policy development.

SunSmart aims to:

- increase knowledge of the causes of skin cancer and the importance of early detection among defined target groups
- increase awareness of actions that can be taken to prevent skin cancer
- positively influence attitudes to sun protection

The campaign has a dedicated section on its website stating the dangers of sunbed use: <http://www.sunsmart.org.uk/staysafe/sunbeds/>.

SunSmart is research based, with national tracking surveys monitoring its impact and effectiveness and qualitative and pre-test research driving its outputs.

More information about SunSmart and skin cancer prevention can be found on the dedicated website: www.sunsmart.org.uk

Contact details

For more information please contact Vicky Crichton, Cancer Research UK's Senior Public Affairs Officer on 0131 243 2641 or email vicky.crichton@cancer.org.uk

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¹ International Agency for Research on Cancer Working Group on artificial ultraviolet (UV) light and skin cancer. The association of use of sunbeds with cutaneous malignant melanoma and other skin cancers: A systematic review. Int J Cancer (2006).

² For example, we are aware that some salons have mentioned the link between UV exposure and vitamin D production, but the balance of evidence suggests that casual exposure to the sun should be sufficient; it is not necessary to use sunbeds to get enough vitamin D. See <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/healthyliving/sunsmart/aboutsunsmart/howdoweknow/vitamins/> for further details.

³ Advertising Standards Agency Adjudication- objection upheld against The Sunbed Association for production of a leaflet stating 'Vitamin D essential for good health, Sunbed sessions ARE good for you.' 7th September 2005.

⁴ All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2053 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 3rd - 6th July 2009. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+). <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/news/archive/pressrelease/2009-07-16-public-want-ban-on-sunbeds-for-under-18s>

⁵ Occasionally, sunbeds are used in medical settings to treat certain health conditions, for example, skin cirrhosis. The Bill makes an exception to allow sunbeds to be used by young people in medical settings if supervised by an appropriate health professional.

⁶ Spencer, J. & Amonette, R. Indoor tanning: risks, benefits and future trends. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 33, 288-98 (1995).

⁷ International Agency for Research on Cancer Working Group on artificial ultraviolet (UV) light and skin cancer. The association of use of sunbeds with cutaneous malignant melanoma and other skin cancers: A systematic review. *Int J Cancer* [epub ahead of print] (2006).

⁸ IARC (2009) A review of human carcinogens—Part D: radiation

⁹ Gerber, B., Mathys, P., Moser, M., Bressoud, D. & Braun-Fahrlander, C. Ultraviolet emission spectra of sunbeds. *Photochem Photobiol* 76, 664-8 (2002).

¹⁰ Wester, U., Boldermann, C., Jansson, B. & Ullen, H. Population UV-dose and skin area- do sunbeds rival the sun? *Health Phys* 77, 436-40 (1999).

¹¹ Young, A. Tanning Devices – fast track to cancer? *Pigment Cell Res* 17, 2-9 (2004).

¹² Diffey, B. A quantitative estimate of melanoma mortality from ultraviolet A sunbed use in the UK. *Br J Dermatol* 149, 578-81 (2003).

¹³ Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) (2009). *Thirteenth Report. The health effects and risks arising from exposure to ultraviolet radiation from artificial tanning devices*. Health Protection Agency, June 2009. http://www.comare.org.uk/comare_docs.htm

¹⁴ Cancer Research UK commissioned two surveys - funded by the National Cancer Action Team and supported by the Department of Health - to assess just how many children use sunbeds and where. The first survey questioned 3,100 children from all over England about their tanning habits. The second survey questioned 6,200 children across six different 'cities' including Liverpool and Sunderland.

¹⁵ Cancer Research UK study of sunbed use in children in Wales, 2008.

¹⁶ Diffey BL, personal communication. 2005.