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**Responses on the “Recommendations of the Working Group on
Differentiation between Medical Procedures and Beauty Services”
Meeting of Legislative Council Panel on Health Services, 23 December 2013**

The Provisional Hong Kong Academy of Nursing (PHKAN) supports in principle the regulation of professional practice to safeguard the health of the public. We represent 14 Academy Colleges with 2289 Fellows who are practicing in various nursing specialties. We advocate the regulation of healthcare professionals to ensure that they are educated and competent to practice in the specified areas of practice, as well as the regulation of practice settings, for the safety of the public.

The discussion arises from an incident which unfortunately resulted in one death and serious sequelae of three other individuals. The incident involved intravascular infusions in the name of ‘health therapy’ that took place in a beauty center in October 2012. In this particular setting, there is a medical doctor involved. Thus, it is too simplistic to equate safety to having a registered medical practitioner involved in the treatment. Safe practice in the healthcare arena deals with human lives. This requires competent providers, regulated setting and more importantly, exercise of conscientious professional ethics. “Do no harm” is the first and key rule of thumb for all healthcare professionals. Client’s wellbeing must take precedence over the practitioner’s self interest.

In regard to the differentiation between medical procedures and beauty services, it probably cannot be distinguished easily by its intention, that is, whether the procedure is achieving a health or beauty effect. Beauty and health are intertwined. One’s outlook may affect one’s self-image which is an essential component of the total state of health. To protect the public, the PHKAN believes that the ‘high risk’ procedures should only be delivered by trained and certified healthcare professionals. What are ‘high risk’ procedures? These are usually invasive procedures. To simply put, the risk is high if the procedure can result in major health sequel or even death; and that the risk can only be mitigated by the availability of immediate remedial actions by appropriate healthcare professional in an appropriately equipped environment.



The Provisional Hong Kong Academy of Nursing

臨時香港護理專科學院

LG1, School of Nursing, Princess Margaret Hospital, 232 Lai King Hill Road, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon
Telephone: 2370 0335 Fax: 2370 0216

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Contemporary healthcare advocates interdisciplinary team approach and patient involvement. In the dynamic nature of healthcare service environment and technologies, there deem to be evolving transprofessional overlaps or shared competence. Thus, it will be more important and appropriate to define the competency for practice instead of the professional to practice. Last but not least, patients must be properly informed of the possible benefits and risks involved in the treatment and procedures. Informed choices and empowered decision making by the clients should be the crux of the matter.

In conclusion, although zero error is almost impossible in any human practices, the provider must have the competence and moral stand to assess and identify risks, take actions to prevent the risks, set contingency measures and remedy the situation if adverse incident does happen.

The Hong Kong Provisional Academy of Nursing

16 December 2013