

Wright, Dean

From: Wallner, Peter
Sent: Friday, 17 February 2012 2:37 PM
To: Leach, Joshua
Subject: FW: Teeth Whitening Products [SEC=IN-CONFIDENCE]

Attachments: New Image.JPG



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-----Original Message-----

From: Peter Alldritt [mailto:palldritt@roseparkdental.com.au]
Sent: Thursday, 15 September 2011 8:26 AM
To: Wallner, Peter
Subject: Teeth Whitening Products

Mr Peter Wallner
Australian Competition & Consumer Commission Product Safety Area

Dear Peter,

Re : Australians at risk of injury from teeth whitening

Thankyou for the opportunity to discuss over the counter (OTC) teeth whitening products on the phone on Monday.

I was reassured to learn that your department has identified the potential for misuse and damage by inappropriate teeth whitening kits. I was particularly alarmed by your discovery that some of the products you investigated contained concentrations of carbamide peroxide as high as 22% and 36%. I can confirm that these concentrations are much higher than dentists would usually prescribe for their patients.

The Australian Dental Association (ADA) shares your concerns and in May 2011 launched a dedicated website www.teethwhiteningfacts.com.au to help the public understand the alternatives available for teeth whitening. It also highlights the dangers of teeth whitening performed without a dentist's diagnosis and treatment prescription (ie OTC products and services provided by beauticians and hairdressers). The ADA also launched a public awareness campaign and received considerable media coverage over the following 3 months. Hopefully the message is starting to penetrate the community that teeth whitening can be perilous if not prescribed by a registered dental practitioner.

You may be aware that in May the CHOICE consumer group also, coincidentally, issued a media release entitled "Whiter Teeth Craze Thrives With No Rules". There was also an article in the June edition of CHOICE magazine.

In our discussion you requested injury data relating to teeth whitening. Unfortunately the ADA is in a similar position to the ACCC in that it has only anecdotal evidence of damage from teeth whitening. When members of the public are damaged by teeth whitening OTC kits or by bleaching applied by a beautician or hairdresser, they will usually present to their dentist (somewhat embarrassed) after the event. I have attached a photograph of a lady whose gums were severely burned by application of a bleaching agent by a beautician. This lady provided this evidence to the ADA in response to a story she saw on television, hoping she could help other unsuspecting people to avoid similar injury. The same injury could occur from an OTC product because the bleaching gel is not confined to the tooth surface and because the concentration of the peroxide could be too high.

The kinds of injuries we see from inappropriate teeth whitening include:

- alteration to the surface enamel of the teeth
- reduced strength of dental filling materials
- damaged and inflamed gums
- chemical burns to the gums and oral soft tissues

- blistering of gums and oral tissues
- severe tooth sensitivity
- multi-coloured teeth, as a result of fillings, crowns and veneers not changing colour.

I am told that in South Africa there has recently been a ban placed on teeth whitening outside of a dental practitioner's prescription. The General Dental Council in the UK are currently investigating a number of complaints against non-dental personnel (ie beauticians and hairdressers) who have caused harm to their customers by teeth whitening.

In Australia, the Dental Board of Australia states "Teeth whitening/bleaching is an irreversible procedure on human teeth and any tooth whitening/bleaching products containing more than 6% concentration of the active whitening/bleaching agent, should only be used by a registered dental practitioner with education, training and competence in teeth whitening/bleaching."

Worksafe Australia's current guidelines list hydrogen peroxide at concentrations above 5% as a hazardous substance.

The ADA welcomes any action which progresses the safety of the public and protects them from injury by inappropriate use of OTC kits and administration of teeth whitening by non-dental personnel. Please let me know if the ADA can assist your department any further.

Kind regards,

Dr Peter Alldritt.
Chairman, Oral Health Committee
Australian Dental Association.

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