

Get Brown Tanning's Position on National Radiation Laboratory Guidelines

Version 1.2 to November 2011

As a leading supplier to the indoor tanning industry since 1988, and a dedicated Auckland retail clinic for the last six years, Get Brown Tanning is uniquely qualified to analyse the documents designed to guide new and existing operators to better client management practices, with the overall aim of improving public health outcomes. We identify these documents as well-intentioned but at times with limited workability due to bias against the industry, and believe there is a strong need to provide some balance for sunbed operators. The following sets out the main points to consider when reviewing the guideline documents.

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NRL Guidelines for Operators of Ultraviolet (UV) Tanning Lamps (Feb 09)

Where we consider there are comments, disagreements or omissions to the document these are discussed in detail. If a point does not appear in this discussion document, it is assumed that point is accepted and recommended as a guideline to one's indoor tanning service environment.

Introduction

The inclusion of the sentence regarding the discouraging of use of solarium for cosmetic purposes sets an inappropriate tone for the purposes of this document. Using this as a starting point for a training guideline for sunbed operators to comply with is both unlikely to achieve that result, AND constitutes an unreasonable disadvantage to the commercial operation. Health authorities may well discourage the use of this equipment, but this opinion has high-profile and well-respected critics¹. In New Zealand the use of sunbeds is not illegal and should not be treated as if it is.

Further- while industry guidelines suggest clients should be warned about the increased likelihood of skin ageing via ultraviolet radiation exposure (UVR)- which we do and recommend operators do also- we disagree that the point is relevant to the betterment of public health outcomes for skin cancer. This point is a purely aesthetic, cosmetic concern and the highlighting of it by dermatologists is ethically questionable given the nature of their provision of commercial, non-essential skin therapy services. Ageing of the skin via UVR has not been shown to cause an increase in the likelihood of contracting skin cancer.

GBT's issues with clause 2.12 of the Standard are well-documented.

¹ Moan, J et al. 'Vitamin D, sun, sunbeds and health.' Public Health Nutrition 2011 Oct 24:1-5.

5. Client assessment

5.1 Interview

A tanning operator should reject any client whose skin type is assessed as a skin type 1. There is no requirement for one to apply their own totally subjective assessment of whether a client “is especially sensitive to UV rays.”

5.1.1 Skin type assessment

A good skin typing questionnaire should be used for every new client. Assessing the suitability of a client for tanning is not about guesswork! The suggestions in this descriptive area of the guideline- while obviously intended to provide more information to ‘flesh out’ the skin type assessment- are fairly misleading. There is no substitute for working through the assessment with a client, and judgments should not be made on the basis of appearance or hair colour.

Further- the idea of “discouraging people with skin type II” is a completely unreasonable expectation of an operator. All clients should be given appropriate warnings, and a responsible operator will highlight these warnings more strenuously the lower the skin type- ensuring they understand they must take the highest precautions possible as they are in the highest risk group allowed to use indoor tanning equipment. Unless and until the Standard is revised to include skin types II in a ban on use, AND/OR unless and until the Standard is legally enforceable (thereby requiring a definition of the word “discourage”), there is no requirement, in our view, for an operator to attempt to dissuade a client from using their sunbed equipment, as long as that operator fulfils the obligations regarding necessary restrictions and warnings.

5.1.3 Exclusions

Please see notes above in 5.1.1 ‘Further-’. The only voluntary requirement necessary at present is to restrict the use of indoor tanning equipment by skin types I or by those under the age of 18. It is not the sunbed operator’s obligation to turn away other high-risk clients, as long as consent is given following appropriate warnings, and that client has consented on a fully informed basis. The impact on both personal and commercial freedom in these suggestions is unacceptable.

5.1.4 Client Consent Form

As we did with the Standard itself, we argue there should be no costly and cumbersome requirement on a sunbed operator to supply a client with a copy of the Consent Form.

‘This requirement is totally unnecessary, provided the client is given ample time and a reasonable environment to read, digest and discuss the information. It is simply a time-consuming and costly additional compliance measure for the indoor tanning provider. Get Brown Tanning does not provide a copy of the client consent form to clients as standard practice; rather we provide clients with an opportunity to request a copy.’

6. Tanning plan

There is a major gap in the logic here, and that concerns the duration of time elapsing between sessions. Tanning plans are all well and good, but if there is no allowance made in your data management for lapses in time between sessions, clients may be at risk.

For example, a tanning schedule may be set for a starting time of 5 minutes, with 9 more sessions progressing through 6 minutes to 11 minutes exposure. Say the client has 3 visits, proceeding from 5 minutes to 7 minutes exposure at the last session. Say the client then has an unforeseen break in the tanning plan for a period of 6-8 weeks. When the client comes back for session #4, a session time of 8 minutes is unlikely to be appropriate; rather the client should begin again at 5 minutes. The guideline gives no suggestion on how this time lapse phenomenon should or could be allowed for.

6.1 Determination of MED

In our view, this entire section suffers from over-complication. It is useful as a reference in the Standard, but not in these guidelines which are intended as a practical management guide. What is more important is a simple-to-understand tanning schedule protocol- based on skin type, client's UV sensitivity/resistance, frequency of sessions, lapse of time between sessions- and a good working knowledge of the output of the operation's tanning unit(s) in determining exposure times based on these criteria. Manufacturers of equipment provide recommended exposure schedules based on skin type for initial and subsequent sessions, and these should form the basis of the salon's own guidelines for the determination of exposure times.

8. Operating the lamps

We advise 'goggles' are not the only type of permissible protective eyewear. Disposable eyewear is also allowed, as long as they form a good seal around the eyes and are easy to use.

Also, in terms of clothing worn and risking excessive exposure during subsequent sessions if this clothing is removed, we advise clients be told about the use of chemical sunscreen which can manage this situation if it changes. (E.g wishing to uncover a previously covered area of skin after a number of sessions can be managed with the use of sunscreen to minimize the total exposure received on the localized area.)

8.1 Preparations

As noted in the Standard position, restriction to 48 hours between sessions is unnecessarily excessive. The guideline of 24-48 hours should suffice, or in practical terms- advise a client not to come back for a tanning session until the day following the next day after that tanning session. This will always be more than 24 hours but may be slightly less than 48 hours.

Also, it is important the operator asks the client to report any reaction occurring in the skin between the previous session time and now. This may include a feeling of warmth, slight tingling, slight pink changes (it is important to question the timing of this- was it immediately after the session and faded soon after? Then it was a heat reaction. Or was it pink through to the next day, did it feel tender? Then the client may need to skip today's session, or at least reduce the exposure time.)

9. After tanning sessions

9.1 Advice to client

See notes above in 8.1 Preparations regarding 48 hour advice.

10. Just before the next tanning session

We advise there is no need for an operator to violate a person's right to personal space by inspecting their skin for "ill-effects". The operator is only obligated to request the information; the client- having signed an informed consent form- is free to choose what information they supply.

Client Interview Record

Tanning Habits/ tanning cream... this reference must be removed as it may skew the results of the assessment. GBT contacted the NRL about this on 5th October 2011. A representative replied some weeks later feeling the inclusion is satisfactory as a self-tanner may produce a different colour in the skin. GBT replied pointing out this likelihood is not allowed for if an operator is following the assessment to the letter, and an answer in the affirmative may put a client at risk of being assessed a higher skin type than they are and subsequently being given more session time than they should. We continue to await a response and will update when received.