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Expert: Invasive cosmetic treatments can spread HIV

PETALING JAYA: A health expert has reminded the public that the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) can be spread during invasive procedures such as certain cosmetic treatments.

Dr H Krishna Kumar, former president of the Malaysian Medical Association, was commenting on an article recently published which revealed that Public Health England was investigating the possible risk of HIV being transmitted through the cosmetic treatment known as needle microdermabrasion.

The investigation was initiated after three employees in beauty salons suffered needle stick injuries while performing the treatment.

Needle microdermabrasion involves a handset with a needle-studded cylindrical roller attached to it being moved across the face, creating multiple small punctures that can result in bleeding.

Krishna said unless disposable equipment was used, anything that caused bleeding could spread HIV.

"That is why your local barber uses disposable blades, because when you shave you can injure yourself and reach the blood vessels which can then spread blood-borne diseases like HIV," he told FMT.

He pointed out that cosmetic treat-

ments were not performed by doctors but beauticians, who were not trained to prevent blood-borne diseases.

"If you are not trained then you are most likely not taking the necessary measures to avoid the spread of such diseases."

Krishna, who is also the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' Representative Committee chairman, said with modern medication, it was harder to detect whether a person was suffering from HIV.

"You walk down the street and you don't know whether a person is HIV positive or not. Current medications have made it so that a person with HIV can live a completely normal life."

On whether there had been cases of a person contracting HIV from cosmetic treatment, Krishna said until Public Health England completed its investigations, there was no way of knowing.

"We usually ask a patient who has HIV whether he or she is a drug user or has been promiscuous. We don't ask whether they have gone for beauty treatments and stuff like that.

"Maybe this is where something has happened and they are starting to investigate. We have to wait for the findings to say one way or another."