Dear Dr Roos

RE: Investigation into the potential for adverse health effects associated with tattoo removal creams

SA Health has been advised that a member of the public is alleged to have sustained caustic burns requiring plastic surgery after the application of a tattoo removal cream.

The department is requesting the assistance of your society to determine whether this case is an isolated adverse event or whether tattoo removal creams pose a public health risk. If a risk is determined then further investigation will be undertaken to assess the inherent hazard and the potential contribution of application methods to total product risk. If warranted, subsequent examination of the regulatory controls over these products may occur.

Certain tattoo removal creams are designed to emulsify and stimulate disruption of tattoo ink pigments with subsequent shedding of bound pigments. They can contain isopropanol, triethanolamine, benzoic acid and calcium oxide, all of which can be associated with skin irritation or caustic burns. The creams are intended to be applied topically in conjunction with puncturing the skin using a tattoo gun to deliver the cream into the dermis in the same manner as a permanent ink tattoo.

Case studies describe chemical burns, hypertrophic scarring and hypo-pigmented scarring after tattoo removal cream application. Authors call for improved training and supervision of applicators and tighter regulation and accountability to protect patients.

SA Health would appreciate if you could advise whether, to the knowledge of your society members, there have been cases of adverse outcomes attributed to the use of tattoo removal creams in Australia. If you are aware of any cases, de-identified information relating to these events would assist in this investigation. If you are unable to assist or you are not aware of any cases, notification of this would be gratefully received.

Thank you in anticipation of your assistance. If you have any questions relating to this matter please contact me by email: Carolyn.Lewis@health.sa.gov.au or phone: 08 8226 7156.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Dr Carolyn Lewis
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SA Health
29 May 2012