

Step by Step Guide

*To Choose a Reliable
Cosmetic Practitioner
from a
Patient's Perspective*

DR. BELA
...CLINIC...

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Story at-a-glance

- **The aesthetic market is unregulated in England and Wales.**
- **Absolutely anybody can administer dermal fillers after a one-day training course.**
- **Many procedures are carried out in non-clinical environments, by non-clinicians.**
- **Most patients are unaware of this huge safety risk.**
- **There are however safe and effective treatment options to improve the ageing face.**
- **Patients often don't know how to choose an aesthetic practitioner.**
- **This guide aims to help with this process.**

What is your Perspective on Ageing?

I started my medical career in oncology so I have a special perspective on ageing: GRATITUDE.

As a young doctor, I worked with late-stage skin cancer (melanoma) patients and in spite of our best efforts and treatments, we lost many of them. It was always a difficult conversation to talk about death and dying, but it was a bit easier when the patient was over 50 - *they have had a life at least* - I thought back then.

Today, being over 50 is enough reason for me to be grateful, when I think back to those patients who didn't have a chance to make it. So, when a new patient comes to me for their first aesthetic consultation and complains about ageing I always share my perspective, and they feel better and more grateful immediately.

Ageing is something we all need to live with and thanks to recent developments in cosmetic technologies we have safe and effective methods to improve the ageing face and make our look fresher and better.



Is it about Vanity or Something Else?

Does it matter how we look, whether we have a couple more lines or less?

The answer has some individual and some general aspects. We all age differently due to our genetic background (bone support) and to our lifestyle (cumulative sun damage, smoking, diet and air pollution), but sooner or later everybody develops the telltale signs.

Some of us look better for their age while others are less fortunate.

It might be your way of thinking that *'I am going to age gracefully and I accept whatever comes'*. Unfortunately, this question has another side, outside of your influence.

It is not the lines and whether you like them that are the big questions. It is their message they send out about you continuously on a subconscious level.

The main complaint of my patients helps you to understand what I am talking about and it is:

"I feel good and happy, but my friends and family keep asking and commenting on why I am so angry and sad all the time; ... and I'm not!"

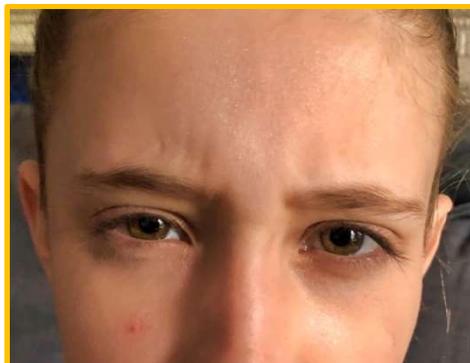
So, what's going on?

The human brain and perception is a complicated thing. It handles millions of bits of information for us without noticing and only a fraction of it is projected to the conscious level. Our brain deletes, generalises and distorts information for us to make our lives manageable and easy. Obviously, it has its benefits and traps too.

As everything, our communication with others has these two layers: the unconscious and the conscious. We also know that from studies regarding human communication that body language has the biggest impact on the meaning of our communication, which is completely unconscious.

OK, so what to do with the signs of ageing?

They become part of our body language. Time changes our body language permanently. When a young person - such as my daughter - wants to send me a message of *"now daddy I am angry with you..."* she unconsciously uses her frown muscles to make the grimace so I understand her feelings immediately and my brain reads the message and interprets it accordingly.



What happens with age then? Due to decades' of use of the frown muscles and sun damage and other signs of ageing, our young, roundish, full faces becomes sunken, hollow and decorated with deep lines, so the above mentioned emotional signals become permanently fixed on our face.

With age more and more negative emotional attributes appear on our face which have a detrimental effect on our nonverbal communication. We continuously send out negative emotional messages to others independently to how we really feel which can be quite confusing for other parties to read. It becomes an emotional noise.

Furthermore, the human brain is wired to beauty which means healthy genes, so better chances for successful reproduction which is an evolutionary benefit. So, we are programmed to unconsciously seek beauty.

Looking our best Does Matter

Looking good (our best) has a significant impact on our lives. Following a healthy balanced diet (such as the Mediterranean diet), doing regular intense exercise, protecting our skin from the sun, having a good quality daily skincare routine, having a good style in dressing up and managing the signs of aging are all part of maintaining our best appearance.

When we are satisfied with our look it has a positive impact on our self-confidence and we come through in a more positive way in different life situations. It is an advantage and it contributes to the overall quality of life. I have experienced this transformation many times in my practice through the stories of my patients.

So, managing the signs of ageing and maintaining your best look* have many positive implications that point far beyond the question of vanity into the territory of self-confidence, happiness and overall quality of life. Both for Men and Women.

***Maintaining your best look - Reminder:** healthy and balanced diet, regular intense exercise, skin care, sun protection, active relaxation, good sleep, daily meditation, maintaining social connections and having fun.

What's Next?

“OK, by now I understand how facial aesthetics and improving my look fits in the overall health and quality of life picture. But with so many “cowboys” out there aiming to make easy money with careless treatments, how can I find a reliable practitioner?”

Here we are at the very subject of this booklet!

By now, you understand that ageing is something we need to be grateful for. We also know that the signs of ageing contribute to negative emotional attributes and messages which have an influence on our human relations, self-confidence, how we feel and overall quality of life.

The Good News

The good news is, due to recent developments of the cosmetic and health technologies today we have safe and effective methods to improve the different parts and aspects of the ageing body. There are amazing developments in energy based devices (such as lasers, ultrasound, radio frequency, cryo-lipolysis to mention a few) and in injectable treatments (dermal fillers and botulinum toxin) as well.

So, the good news is there are effective, proven, tested and safe treatments out there in safe hands.

The Bad News

Every industry has their cowboys. There are financial advisors (brokers) who are willing to sell you a financial product without a blink of an eye that they surely know is not good for you, but good for the company they represent and for their commission. This is the same for insurance, legal matters, investments, property, health and the cosmetic industry too. It is very difficult to find good and ethical people; I struggle with it often too.

It is easy to buy cheap lasers or any other devices from China, un-tested fillers and botox from the internet and to administer it at a non-clinical location such as a private home or at the back of a barber shop by a non-clinician for pure monetary reasons without any insurance or regulatory supervision. And many patient fall for it. Especially those who cannot afford the reliable options, for example young, vulnerable people looking at the price tag only.

Cheap aesthetic procedures are usually cheap for a reason.

You Get What You Pay For. This is a general rule of 'nature' across all industries.

So, how can you find a good, reliable clinician in the field of injectable cosmetic treatments such as Dermal Filler and Botox injections which are fundamental to improve an aging face, who you can trust for many years to come?

Follow these steps

By now, you understand that ageing is a blessing, but with catches. It is important to manage its downsides for an overall quality of life benefit. You also know that there are safe and effective technologies out there in good and reliable hands, BUT you also understand that there are some gold diggers, adventurers and cowboys waiting for you too.

If you follow these steps in your journey to the jungle of the cosmetic industry in England and Wales you have a better chance to get out of it in good shape and without snake bites!

How can you find a practitioner at all?

There are 3 main ways to find a clinician for the purpose of having the first consultation (not the treatment at this point):

1. Via recommendation from one of your friends or family members
2. Google search
3. Responding to an advert

1. Recommendation:

This is the main source for new patients in my practice in Chiswick, West London. A satisfied, happy patient recommends his/her doctor to their friends or family. Recommendation is good because it is based on personal experience and trust. It is good for me as well because it means, with a new patient, we have a certain level of trust to start with.

On the other hand, recommendation has its catches too. The friend or family member who recommends a practitioner might not have his/her due diligence to start with and their perception may be flawed. They can be happy with the cheap price for example and happy to recommend for this reason only. Recommendation can be a risky game for the patient as well, because if the other friend or family member won't be happy it might affect their relationship. For this reason I am personally very careful when I recommend a service or product to someone else.

Overall, recommendation can be a good start and you can ask some clarifying questions from your friend based on this guidance, which can help you to find your practitioner.

2. Google search:

If you want to find a clinic near you for cosmetic procedures you can use keywords like "dermal fillers in Chiswick" or "botox in Chiswick" or "skin clinic in Chiswick" and you are faced with a list of clinics providing the services you are looking for. You can use the Google or Facebook star rating as a rough guidance, but you ultimately need to check the websites to find out more about the practice.

First, go to the About page to find out more on the practice and the clinician. You can see immediately the look and feel of the website, but you need to go into details, especially about the **credentials** of your future doctor. **Trainings, years in practice, memberships in professional bodies, CQC (Care Quality Commission) accreditation and testimonials** are those things you are looking for.

Then it's worth checking the pages of different treatment options, how detailed they are and whether you can understand it clearly, and whether they answer your questions.

A very good way to find out more about your future clinician is if they have **videos on their website** talking about different topics around your interests. A video reveals a lot about the personality of the doctor so you can see whether you resonate with him/her and whether you have a connection straight away.

If you like the website, the information, the professional credentials, testimonials, some before-after pictures (case studies) and especially you have seen them speaking on a video that you like, you can book a free consultation straight away to find out more.

3. Responding to an advert:

Even the best practices and brands need advertising. In today's world the clever ones and especially those who want to maximise their advertising budget choose the online space where the ads can be very precisely targeted and they get in front of those and only those who might be interested. So, if you are someone who could benefit from facial aesthetic treatments and especially if you searched for it online you will be served with these ads. Alternatively, you can spot an ad in your local newspaper or magazine which can get your attention.

In regards to an advert, be mindful of exaggerations, unrealistic promises or suspiciously cheap prices or big discounts. Remember: You Get What You Pay For.

When it's about your face, your look and your safety, saving a couple of pounds shouldn't be an issue or saving really big - so "get something great for rock bottom prices" is an illusion and an alarming safety risk.

Managing expectations is a very important issue in aesthetics. Having realistic expectations and promises and delivering on them is important. The following quote is my beacon in this regard:

“Anything before the treatment is INFORMATION, after treatment is EXCUSE”

If you like an advert and the style of the message resonates with you, especially if you can get value out of it - it teaches you something or opens your eyes for something - then you can click through to the website and go through the same process that I described above.

If you are happy to proceed after visiting the website and checking the professional details of your future doctor, then you can book in your initial consultation with him or her.

The initial consultation

According to studies by asking over 2000 British women, sometimes it took them over 10 - yes, ten - years to make up their mind and get enough courage to visit a doctor and talk about some possible treatments to improve their signs of ageing.

Regarding the initial consultation, you can have absolute peace of mind, because you don't need to commit to anything. It is about finding out more about the ageing process, your future doctor, the clinic and the treatments it provides. There shouldn't be any circumstance or pressure on you to book or have a treatment immediately.

Cooling off

The GMC (General Medical Council) recommends a 'Cooling off period' following a consultation about an aesthetic intervention as part of its good medical practice. Even tattoo salons recommend a 24 hour cooling off period on the high street before a tattoo is performed, so why should anybody jump into a treatment which could result in a complication, especially in untrained hands, without reflecting on it?

So, there **MUST NOT BE** any pressure on you during the initial consultation in this regard.

What to watch for during the initial aesthetic consultation?

As you arrive to the clinic try and observe the **cleanliness of the premises**, the reception area, so you can feel how well the practice is run and how professional it is.

I don't need to mention that, if it is a private home or any other non-clinical environment, you respectfully excuse yourself and go to the next coffee shop and find another clinic while having a good coffee(!)

Once you are in the doctor's office you observe the same: **clean and professional image**. There is another thing that is easy to spot and it's a **yellow sharps bin or clinical waste container**, which must be part of any practice which runs on a professional basis. (You might not see one if your initial consultation is not held in a treatment room)



Then, it's time for a conversation with your future cosmetic practitioner candidate. The most important aspect of this conversation which reflects a good practitioner is that he or she asks you what brings you here, what are your concerns and really **LISTENS** to what you are saying. This is the only way to find out more about you, so to be able to serve you with what you need.

After understanding my patient, my next step is **GIVING A BROAD EXPLANATION** about the ageing process, what is going on and what causes the changes they experience. It answers a lot of questions straight away and gives confidence.

By this point I understand my patient and he/she understands what is happening with the ageing process, so whatever has brought them here is absolutely normal. My next step then is the **EXAMINATION**. So I examine the whole face and I give an overall **treatment approach** (it is not a detailed plan yet) highlighting my **priorities** and giving reasons and understanding **WHY** I think that particular way and order I do. I also show some **before-after pictures** about the treatment outcomes.

The next important part I talk about is the **benefits and potential complications** of the treatments that I have recommended. I also tell if I don't recommend treatment at all. I mention the **BRAND NAMES** I use, explain why **original, FDA (Food and Drug Administration, USA) approved products** are important mainly for safety reasons, but it impacts the quality of the treatment and longevity as well. Finally, I hand out the **consent forms** that the patient needs to sign before the treatment which detail all possible complications and other important aspects of the treatment. They have time to read and reflect on it at home.

I give a caveat here: the reason why I emphasize what 'I' do, is because it can be done in a different way or order as well, but the meaning and the end result should be roughly the same.

During the whole process I answer further questions and finally I give a **price estimation** and explain how the prices are calculated.

This is my **Initial Free Consultation** which takes 30 minutes and there is no obligation whatsoever to return.

What can I ask?

If your future practitioner doesn't mention brand names of products he/she uses you can ask about them and whether they are FDA approved. I personally wouldn't allow anything else to be put under my skin unless it is FDA approved. I use products manufactured by Allergan (the Juvederm range and Botox).

You might respectfully ask about complications, whether he/she has experienced any, what was that and whether he/she is ready to manage complications if they appear.

For example, If you asked me, "*What do you consider the most important safety aspect of your treatments?*" I would answer: Hygiene. Cleansing my patients hands, the treatment area, using sterile equipment and maintaining the sterility along the whole treatment is crucial. If the patient wants to improve this aspect she arrives without makeup.

Your first treatment

So, by now you are confident about your decisions. You checked the clinic's website, your practitioner's professional profile, you have visited the clinic and have had an initial consultation or more with other clinics to find your best fit.

You understand what is going on with the ageing process and you also understand what treatment options are recommended and why.

You know what to expect from the treatments and have had enough time to reflect on the possible complications too.

You understand that these non-surgical injectable treatments - such as Dermal Fillers and Botox - are safe in good hands, the downtime is minimal and although the chances are very small, complications can happen and your practitioner should be ready to deal with them if needed. Millions of these treatments are performed globally yearly, the results are natural when performed well and there is a reason behind their popularity.

So, you are ready for your first treatment, although a bit anxious not knowing exactly what to expect, whether it is painful or not. Interestingly the pain or discomfort is an issue that I find difficult to effectively manage on the level of expectations. Patients don't truly believe me when I say the treatment is not painful, but I also don't want to give them the false expectation of a pampering treatment; there are needles involved.

However, by the end of the treatment when I ask my patients about the discomfort they experienced the answer is usually "*it was much less than I expected...*" follow by a big smile of relief.

What to check during your first treatment?

Now, you are in a treatment room, look for the yellow sharps bin and the clinical waste container. They must be there. If not, that is an issue to ask about.

You have signed the medical history form detailing all your personal data, medical history, allergies, medications and previous treatments.

You have also discussed in detail, read, thought about, reflected on, genuinely understand - if not asked - and signed the relevant consent forms - including consent to photography and the use of your pictures.

Your hands and the treatment area is meticulously cleansed, all makeup removed, hair is tightened back.

You have a clear understanding which areas of your face will be treated, what will be used, what results can be expected and when.

You are examined in a sitting up position (important) and the treatment is mapped out on your skin with a marker pencil while sitting.

Then you lie down on the couch covered by a single use paper-sheet in a semi-sitting position.

The practitioner wears gloves.

You might be aware that the treatment is serviced from a clean surface covered by a single use sterile paper or plastic sheet.

There are many other important factors coming after this point, but you - as a patient - are not in a position to mindfully observe them. The treatment and the practitioners touch should be gentle and the treatment shouldn't be rushed. I always play music while treating.

I don't use numbing cream for my treatments except the lips, however I tend not to use there either, so it is not an important factor. In many places numbing cream is used as a placebo, so a psychological relief when it is applied for less than 30 minutes.

Again, if the treatment is rushed, the procedure is rough and painful, the movements are harsh that might be a sign of inappropriate approach. You should be able to stay relaxed and confident during the whole procedure.

Straight after the treatment you can see the immediate results when dermal fillers were used, but Botox needs several days to develop.

After procedure care should be explained. I always send an email to my patients with the after care explained and with my personal mobile number to be accessible if needed. Never yet has a single patient abused my personal mobile access :-)

I also explain what to expect after the procedure and what is not acceptable, so the patient needs to call me if he or she experiences straightaway pain, swelling, redness or herpes-like symptoms - never happened touch wood.

Lips swell up for a couple of days post procedure, so this treatment shouldn't be booked in prior to any important social event.

A follow up appointment should be also discussed. Botox always has a top up session, but dermal fillers should be checked upon as well and further treatment planned if needed.

So, the whole experience should be smooth and comfortable. By the end of your first treatment if you have had a good experience, it is almost certain that you are in good hands.

I believe that a practitioner with good credentials, clean and professional premises, thorough consultation, detailed consent process, known product brands and relaxed treatment procedure are all necessary as part of a good practitioner protocol. Other pieces such as aspiration before injection and maintained hygiene are also mandatory.

If you have good results and are happy, it means you have found a good practitioner for years to come.

Since these are biological treatments and not Lego pieces to be put together, slight variations are possible and can be corrected if needed. I also aim for natural results which are not obvious, but reflect a relaxed and refreshed look.

I don't recommend chasing perfection with these treatments because it is not possible and takes a difficult path for both the patient and practitioner.

What is next?

Since the aim of this booklet is to empower you to be able to choose a reliable cosmetic practitioner for your treatments for long term, by the point when you have had your treatment completed you must be certain whether you've made a good decision or not.

There are many other considerations for injectable non-surgical treatments such as Dermal Fillers and Botox but I am going to cover these during the video series that I send to your inbox as part of your subscription.

If you are not subscribed yet, but you would like to receive this valuable information you can do it on my website: www.DrBela.clinic. Knowledge is power!

I hope you found this document valuable and really empowering. I genuinely believe that it can save you money and above all avoid discomfort and disappointment.

I wish you to enjoy the results of your treatments and the newly gained confidence boost!

Yours respectfully,

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