

# Public to be protected from quacks' fake cancer treatments in cross-party crackdown

Coalition of MPs to revamp laws over fears pandemic backlog is leading patients to try dangerous 'cures'

By Justin Stoneman

RADICAL measures to protect the public from fake cancer treatments are under review by the Government, *The Sunday Telegraph* can disclose.

A cross-party coalition of MPs has united in an effort to overhaul the 81-year-old Act of Parliament that authorities rely upon to police cancer cure propaganda.

*The Telegraph* understands that ministers have discussed expanding the Cancer Act 1939 on numerous fronts, including the policing of medically unproven diagnostics, the prohibition of dangerous treatments, and tighter crackdowns on social media posts.

MPs across the political divide have joined forces over fears that a backlog in cancer treatments during the Covid-19 crisis will lead to an increase in people seeking dangerous alternative treatments.

Modernisation of the Act will prove to be a "great weapon" in the fight to protect people who are vulnerable and gravely ill, Anthony Browne, the Conservative MP for South Cambridgeshire, said.

"The advertisement of treatments is currently outlawed so it makes sense to tighten and expand the Act to include the actual treatments and diagnostics themselves. I have engaged the Health

Secretary on this." Mr Browne said that he was prompted into action following a confidential letter he received from the relative of a constituent who had died following the use of fake cancer treatments.

The letter, listing the dangerous treatments sold and the regulatory changes needed to prohibit them, has been shared with Matt Hancock, the Health Secretary.

A newly-released BBC documentary details a number of individuals who have died following the use of bogus treatments.

"The Department of Health needs to review legislation around alternative cancer treatments in light of these deaths," said Mr Browne.

Penney Lewis, the law commissioner, has said that moves to lower the threshold of criminality for online posts containing fake claims about both cancer and coronavirus treatments are under review.

Chris Matheson, the shadow culture minister, told *The Sunday Telegraph* that new legislative reforms can help protect the country amid an avalanche of social media propaganda.

"The Cancer Act is a fantastic piece of legislation but we know that strengthening and broadening will save lives," he said.

"I am due to meet with constituents in the coming days who know about the pain of losing a loved one after taking deadly fake cancer treatments.

"The loss of such lives makes me upset and angry – it focuses my determination to help tighten the Act and outlaw dodgy practitioners, treatments

## Claiming to cure Unproven treatments for cancer

◆ The Gerson Therapy, developed in the 1920s by a German doctor, became famous for its use of coffee enemas.

Cancer Research says that there is "no evidence" of its effectiveness as a cure.

◆ Deadly black salve receives extensive global promotion on social media. Its proponents claim that the caustic paste eats away cancerous cells.

However, it also eats healthy tissue and has been linked to countless deaths.

◆ Apricot kernels are lucrative for those profiteering in bogus cancer cures.

This all-natural treatment is more likely to kill you than cure you – no evidence exists that the seeds cure cancer, but they definitely contain cyanide.

and diagnostics. The cross-party move to bolster the Cancer Act will save British lives – I know my part is relevant because any departments dealing with culture, data or social media are hugely relevant in this battle."

The Department of Health and Social Care told this newspaper that the law was "under review" and that further action will be taken if deemed necessary.

"The Government is clear that we will do everything we can to protect

our most vulnerable people," a spokesman said.

"We will not tolerate the false advertising of alternative cancer treatments, and will ensure penalties are handed for any breaches of the current law.

"We continue to keep this law under review and will take further action if we deem it necessary."

Under the Cancer Act the publication of advertisements relating to the sales of bogus treatments is punishable by up to three months' imprisonment.

Errol Denton, a former Harley Street practitioner, hit the headlines in 2013 when he was prosecuted.

Court proceedings revealed that Denton charged sick patients £650 for consultations – boasting that he could cure their cancer with herbs and blood analysis. Westminster city council criticised his behaviour as "twisted" and "immoral". Denton was found guilty on nine clauses of the Act and was told to pay fines totalling £19,000.

The Government noted that the Cancer Act was strengthened in 2008 to enable prosecutions to proceed without the initial consultation of the attorney general, and that while the Act was now being reviewed it did not currently have any plans to make changes.

Barbara Keeley, the Labour MP who announced earlier this year that she was battling breast cancer, said that the Cancer Act needed updating immediately, following fresh exposure of loopholes in the legislation.

"It is clear that this law needs updating for the digital age, where disinformation can rapidly spread unchecked online," she said.

## 'Unreliable' scans Sean was never warned, says his mother

The death of Sean Walsh is spotlighted in a new BBC documentary, *False Hope*. Sean, inset, was just 18 when he was diagnosed with cancer. After conventional treatment, his cancer went into remission. When it returned, just two years later, Sean decided

that he would try to cure it with alternative methods – including coffee enemas and cannabis oil. Sean's mother, Dawn, claims that a random encounter with Phil Hughes, a homeopath, influenced her son's opinion about chemotherapy. He relied on



thermography scans at Medical Thermal Imaging, the clinic owned by Mr Hughes and his wife Rosa. Medical experts have warned that these types

of scans are unsuitable for reliable cancer detection. Dawn Walsh claims that the Hughes' did not warn her son about the inadequacies of the scans. Sean's girlfriend, Aimee McDonald, said: "I would like to see MPs work towards outlawing homeopathy."

## 'It was all gumph' Arabella had 'impossible' light treatment

In December 2012, Dr Julian Kenyon told a patient that a soundwave light bed treatment could kill tumour cells in late-stage cancer sufferers. He did not know he was talking to an undercover reporter who had been filming him. The year before the sting,

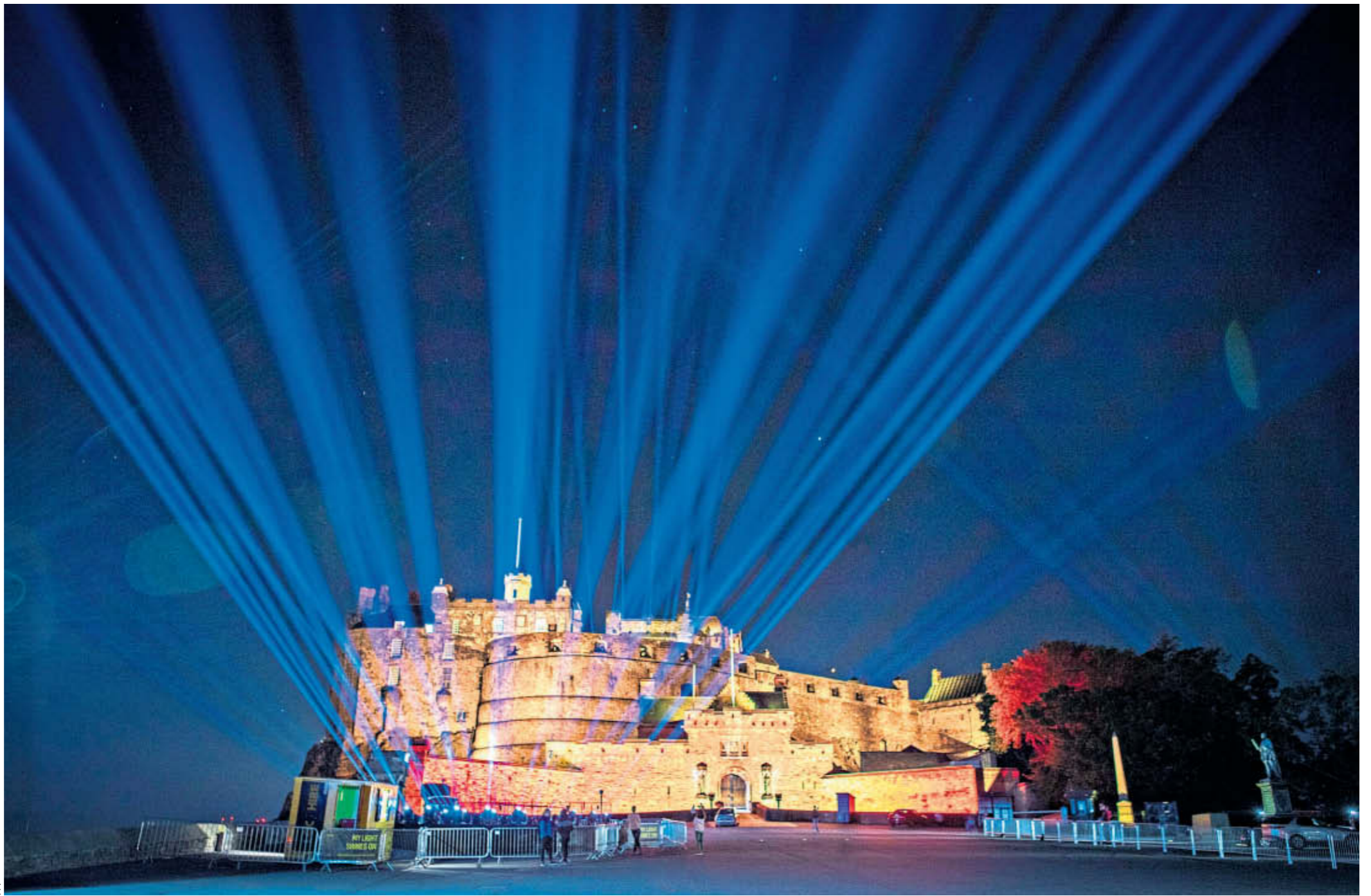


he treated Arabella Vanneck with sono photo dynamic therapy. She died nine months after her final treatment,

leaving five children and husband Joshua, who said: "Arabella was given a spiel about a fluorescent dye that would be injected and bombarded with ultraviolet light. It was all gumph." One medical expert said it was "impossible" to

reach deep-seated tumours with light. Mr Vanneck said he would "heartily support" broader Cancer Act legislation. He suggested "whitewashing" pseudoscientific remedies from the internet. "Con-artist exploitation is gaining ground," he said.

**The shining** Shafts of light soar into the sky above Edinburgh Castle, projected from behind the castle walls, in *My Light Shines On*, a city-wide event marking what would have been the start of the Edinburgh Festival.



# Steep rise in abortions after older women miss out on services

By Nick Owens

ABORTIONS have leapt by more than 10 per cent in many parts of the country – and campaigners say a drive to cut teenage pregnancies partly explains the rise.

Areas including London, Essex, Kent, Leicester, Nottingham and Manchester saw a record number of terminations last year.

Those aged in their late 20s and 30s

are undergoing more procedures than ever before.

Experts say women in this age group often miss out on access to contraception help because it is tailored to younger women and teenagers. They have warned that this, along with the closure of sexual health clinics during the pandemic, means the number of abortions could reach new highs by the end of the year.

Katherine O'Brien, at the British

Pregnancy Advisory Service, said: "Cuts to sexual health services have had a real impact on women's ability to access contraception. In some areas, sexual health services have had to restrict access to clinics.

"Because there is still a concerted drive to reduce teenage pregnancy rates, it can mean that older women miss out on services. During the lockdown, the situation has worsened."

Government figures show, across

## 209,519

Number of abortions carried out in England and Wales last year – a two per cent rise on the 205,295 in 2018

England and Wales, there were 209,519 abortions performed last year. That's up from 205,295 in 2018 – a rise of two

per cent nationally. However, an analysis of regional data found many areas have seen much larger annual rises.

The highest regional surge was in the East Midlands where abortions leapt from 13,605 to 14,733 – a rise of seven per cent. In Nottingham the figure was 14 per cent – the largest annual rise of any English city. In Leicester it was 13 per cent.

Six per cent rises were recorded in the West Midlands and Essex. In Lon-

don – where abortions rose 43,805 to 44,213 – the borough of Hillingdon saw an eight per cent rise. Experts say spending on sexual health services in some parts of the UK has fallen by 25 per cent in real terms in five years.

Jonathan Lord, Marie Stopes UK's medical director, said: "We regularly speak to women who have experienced difficulties accessing contraception and this has deteriorated during the pandemic."

## Online hospital check-ups 'could save £500m'

By Mason Boycott-Owen

MOVING hospital appointments online would save up to a million days off every year, analysis has found.

Research found that around one in three routine consultations for outpatients could be done online, saving the NHS nearly £500million every year.

Workers in the UK are taking an average of one day off a year in order to attend hospital check-ups.

In what it described as its most cautious economic forecast, analysis by healthcare platform Visiba Care said £231.3million was lost from the economy due to time off, with the savings to the economy set to be much higher if more time was saved. It said a further £265.7million could be saved from

fewer no-shows and the better use of clinicians' time.

Prof Sam Shah, a former director of digital development at NHSX, said: "These very important findings reflect the essential need to design accessible health services, using digital channels

*Digital outpatient services could not only help improve economic productivity but also support reduced traffic'*

with modes of consultation that best meet citizen needs. Digital outpatient services could not only help improve economic productivity but will also support reduced road traffic." NHS data

shows that trips to hospitals for check-ups have doubled over the last decade, from 54 to 94-million. Last year, Matt Hancock said that the current model of outpatient services was "outdated" and "wasting too much time".

In April, Sir Simon Stevens, of NHS England, said that the health service should "lock in" changes made during the pandemic to reduce face-to-face outpatient appointments by a third by 2023-24. Eight per cent of face-to-face consultations are not attended by patients, with analysis expecting that this could be reduced by three quarters.

Tina Marshall, of Visiba Care UK, said: "Harnessing the known gains of shifting to digital appointments could play a huge role in relieving pressures on the NHS and wider workforce."

## Raab backs Greenpeace over supertrawlers

By Steve Bird

DOMINIC RAAB has signed a Greenpeace letter urging the Government to ban supertrawlers from fishing in UK protected waters after Brexit.

The Foreign Secretary is among a group of nearly 60 cross-party MPs who are opposed to European Union "high intensity" fishing boats operating in British Marine Protected Areas.

The open letter to George Eustice, the Environment Secretary, is calling on the Government to ensure the protection of the UK's most ecologically sensitive marine areas, which account for about a quarter of UK waters, should become a top priority when Britain leaves the EU Common Fisheries Policy. The letter, signed by scientists,

campaigners and television personalities, urges negotiators brokering the Brexit deal to "ensure that protection of the environment and the livelihoods of the UK's coastal communities are the top priorities when Britain becomes an independent coastal state."

It asks the Government to "ban destructive industrial fishing vessels like supertrawlers from fishing in the UK's Marine Protection Areas."

The letter, also signed by Jeremy Corbyn, the former Labour leader, as well as Joanna Lumley, Sir Michael Palin and Sir Ranulph Fiennes, comes after Greenpeace found industrial fishing vessels more than 330ft long spend thousands of hours each year operating legally in protected UK waters. Philip Evans, a Greenpeace UK oceans cam-

paigner, said: "The writing is on the wall – supertrawlers have no place in our most sensitive and ecologically important waters. Allowing these floating fish factories to operate in our Marine Protected Areas undermines the Government's vision for ocean protection both at home and on the world stage."

"This Government must heed the call from MPs, scientists, campaigners and one of its own Cabinet ministers, and commit to a ban on supertrawlers and other destructive vessels operating in UK MPAs.

"This would pave the way for a network of fully or highly protected marine areas covering 30 per cent of UK waters, and demonstrate that this Government is serious about being a world leader on marine protection."