

Nail salons' unexamined hazards

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I AM pleased to learn that the Boston Public Health Commission will be making its rounds at local nail salons to ensure that health codes are being met ("At city nail shops, guarding workers against a toxic mix," City & Region, Nov. 19).

However, according to the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, of the 10,000 chemicals used by the nail industry, 89 percent have not been safety tested by any independent agency. How, then, can a government agency make safe an environment whose components' risks are minimally understood?

I live in Dorchester and can stick my pinkie out and reach a nail salon. The women who operate them are my neighbors. I patronize these salons and listen to the experiences of the nail technicians. They complain about the same ailments you cited: chronic headaches, trouble breathing, bad skin. But I have also learned about an increased risk of miscarriage. Has this risk been studied or documented? Is the government reluctant to investigate further for fear of shutting down what is a livelihood for many? Or is the government dragging its feet because this is an issue related to immigration, rather than public health?

I hope the work in Boston is intensive and far-reaching, rather than a series of shallow safety reviews, with a public health poster left as a souvenir.

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