Every day you witness dozens of clients take a pew at your backwash and let the stylists do their work. Yet did you know, you could be putting your clients at risk of serious injury or even, in the worst case scenario, death?

Death sounds very overstated from simply washing your client’s hair and yet it is very real and a well-documented complication of overextending the neck, something that often occurs at the backwash.

Known as Beauty parlour syndrome (and sometimes Vertebrobasilar Insufficiency) it occurs when the neck is overextended into a backwash sink during hair washing, damaging the blood vessels in the neck and disrupting the blood flow to the brain, resulting in a potential stroke.

VertebroBasilar Insufficiency was first reported in the early nineties when an American neurologist identified five patients who suffered strokes as a result of prolonged distortion of their necks from sitting at salon backwash basins*.

In 1997, the British medical journal, The Lancet published a report by two British doctors about a 42-year old woman who suffered a stroke after having her hair washed**. The experts said the stroke was due to a tear in her right carotid artery. While this may be rare, it’s an undisputed fact that many clients dread sitting at the backwash for the sheer discomfort it causes.

Sophie Ladlaw, owner of Wonderland – an uber-cool, award-winning salon, based in Livingston – believes in offering her clients ‘an enchanted feel-good experience’ involving not just beautiful hair, but also a journey of the senses. Every client gets a choice of head massage using essential oils, speciality loose leaf teas, a hand massage using foam products and now the ultimate backwash experience featuring the unique HeadBed support cushion. She says: “We’ve been looking to make our backwashes more comfortable for some time now. Although we have top-of-the-range backwashes with leg rests that fully adjust and standard cushions that relieve the pressure on the neck, it isn’t a comfortable position for clients. Also we’re becoming more aware of the health risks associated with BPS. I tried HeadBed at Salon International and straight away felt it could solve our problems – and it has.”

HeadBed is an ingenius head/neck cushion – currently available in more than 30 countries around the world, but only just launched in the UK – and has been designed by the renowned naturopath, Catherine Randabel. Catherine had been seeing an increasing number of clients with neck, head and shoulder pain – and in some cases injury – sustained at the backwash. After further research she discovered that BPS was a real problem and in some cases very dangerous.

“When the neck hyper-extends backwards over the sink – which it often does, even when using a foam comfort cushion – it can put strain and pressure on the delicate blood vessels, nerves and muscles in the neck,” she says.

“At worst it can lead to damage of the vertebrae and smaller arteries of the neck and in some cases is responsible for strokes,” she explains.

This led her to develop HeadBed and she hasn’t looked back. “This product will remove any risk to clients and improve their comfort significantly while at the backwash. And its benefits are unmatched by any other neck cushion available anywhere around the globe,” she says.

HeadBed’s unique and patented design, combining an adjustable head support platform and additional support cushion, relieves unnecessary pressure on the neck by supporting a client’s head at its heaviest point, the occipital bone. This allows the neck muscles to completely relax.

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It’s made from 5-star high grade silicone rubber, is hygienic, soft, ergonomic and durable for literally thousands of washes, so offers salons real value for money and total peace of mind.

HeadBed, which was launched in the UK in October last year, is being distributed and marketed by industry veteran David Webb – formerly international MD for ghd. He says: “I’ve worked with thousands of salon owners and managers around the globe and I know that the number one client grievance is discomfort at the backwash.

“Customer comfort and safety should be a priority for every salon, especially in the current business climate, and HeadBed is a product that will markedly improve standards of salon OH&S. It serves as a wake-up call to salon owners in considering their duty of care towards their client, fully understanding the related health risks that exist at the salon backwash and doing something about it.”