

# How I rediscovered myself in paradise

LAST September, newly single after the end of my 25-year marriage, I decided to go on my first solo holiday. Bali, an island paradise synonymous with the honeymoon market, may not have seemed an obvious choice but it is also home to a range of world-class spa retreats, including the magical Spa Village Resort Tembok, which offers a special nurturing package aimed at lone travellers.

This adults-only resort boasts its own private beach and a range of personalised wellness packages, including the Return To Yourself

## SPA doctor

**Yoga & Wellness programme.** Guests are invited to choose their own activities, and there is a range of treatments, classes, cooking and craft workshops that are all geared towards finding a sense of balance. It meant I had as much or as little to do as I wanted – and I didn't once feel at

all like I was alone. There were daily yoga and meditation sessions that, as a novice, I found easy and relaxing. I spent afternoons by the infinity pool.

### WHAT ARE THE TREATMENTS?

ALL guests receive a 50-minute indoor treatment for each day of their stay.

It starts with the Segara Giri ritual. Segara means ocean and Giri means mountain, and the process begins by burying your feet in black volcanic sand in a bamboo pit. The pit is then filled

with fresh salty steam for 20 minutes or so. It is a unique and invigorating experience and the perfect precursor to a 50-minute Balinese massage.

This combination of treatments worked wonders on an ankle injury I had earlier incurred on a trek to the peak of Mount Batur to catch the sunrise.

### ANYTHING ELSE?

THE resort hosts regular evening events and I was lucky to catch an incredible performance of the Kecak, a traditional Balinese dance. It was the perfect

accompaniment to dinner, which was served in the candlelit main garden. I returned feeling confident that a solo holiday was something I wasn't just capable of, but can thoroughly enjoy.

● *The next Return To Yourself retreats run October 1 to 4, November 5 to 8, December 3 to 6. A three-night, four-day stay, including airport transfers, accommodation, meals, daily yoga, excursions and daily activities costs from £1,065pp. spavillageresort.com*

Emma Holden

By Jo Macfarlane

**I**T WAS the news that raised hope for millions of Britons facing age-related blindness – June Brown, the actress who plays Dot Cotton in EastEnders, had been saved from blindness by what was described as a 'miracle' eye implant operation. Having struggled to even recognise the faces of her own children, she was once again able to read and praised the 'astonishing' results.

But an investigation by this newspaper revealed that scores of patients, some in their 70s and 80s, alleged they were left with little or no difference to their eyesight after paying up to £25,000 for the heavily advertised procedure at the London Eye Hospital in Harley Street.

Now Bobby Qureshi, the surgeon who developed the procedure, faces being struck off by the General Medical Council following an 18-month investigation. The consultant ophthalmologist has been summoned to appear before a disciplinary panel in Manchester facing allegations of dishonesty and misconduct.

Publicly available documents reveal many of the allegations have been made against the clinical conduct of Mr Qureshi in relation to 24 patients treated at the Harley Street clinic.

The surgeon will face further accusations over a claim published about his procedure for age-related macular degeneration (AMD) in paid-for national newspaper advertisements, which was 'unsubstantiated and that he knew was unsubstantiated', according to the documents.

The allegations will be disclosed in full on the first day of the tribunal, which is set to begin on January 14.

The hearing is expected to run until the end of March and the case has been described by a GMC official as 'unusually long', partly because of the high number of patients involved.

The panel will decide whether Mr Qureshi is fit to continue practising as a doctor in Britain. While the allegations could yet be dismissed, the panel could choose to give him a warning, suspend him from the register or even strike him off.

None of the patients involved in the case has yet been named, but it is understood that many involved have previously reported their concerns to this newspaper.

A dossier of evidence involving a significant number of patients was handed to the GMC by the charity The Macular Society in June 2017.

An interim hearing the following month placed restrictions on Mr Qureshi's practice while a probe was launched.

Cathy Yelf, chief executive of The Macular Society, said last night: 'We have previously raised concerns with the GMC and are pleased an investigation is under way.'

Mr Qureshi, who founded the

# Dot Cotton's 'miracle op' eye surgeon faces being struck off by the GMC



**Would you pay £15,000 for a 'miracle' eye implant that might not make a blind bit of difference?**

**INVESTIGATION:** Bobby Qureshi and, above, our report in April 2017 on the implant procedure

London Eye Hospital, has invested heavily in promoting and advertising the lenses he helped to develop. The implants, known as iolAMD and EyeMax Mono, gave hope to millions of patients in Brit-

ain and abroad with AMD. The incurable condition robs sufferers of their eyesight when the part of the eye responsible for central vision deteriorates.

The lenses are inserted during a ten-minute procedure and are known to have helped improve the vision of many hundreds of patients.

However, an advert published in many national newspapers, including The Mail on Sunday, was banned in March 2016 by the Advertising Standards Authority watchdog over its claims that the lenses could improve vision for 'both wet and dry macular degeneration'.

Wet AMD is the active, rapidly advancing form of the disease. The ASA concluded this was not supported by the evidence and this claim will now also be examined by the GMC tribunal.

In a Mail on Sunday Health investigation in April 2017, patients alleged being treated 'like guinea pigs' and claimed that their vision had either improved only slightly or not at all after having the costly implants.

Some complained of the clinic's

hard-sell tactics, which targeted elderly and vulnerable patients desperate to restore their sight at any cost. Many others claimed they had not been adequately warned of the risk the procedure might not work, or that they might need to wear glasses afterwards.

There were failures by the clinic to properly deal with complaints, and delays at getting refunds processed, it was also claimed.

A number of patients are now also involved in legal proceedings against Mr Qureshi and the London Eye Hospital over aspects of their care.

Sophie Jones, a clinical negligence solicitor at law firm Hugh James, confirmed she was representing 15 patients whose cases are ongoing.

She said: 'A number of patients who underwent treatment under his care allege that what precious vision they did have has now been compromised or that they have noticed no improvement to their vision. We urge those who feel that they have been adversely affected by his treatment to seek legal advice.'

The London Eye Hospital is also understood to be facing financial

concerns over outstanding debts in relation to rent payments.

Both its consulting rooms in Harley Street and clinic in Wimpole Street were closed when we visited on Friday afternoon, and neighbours claimed they had been so 'for months'. Phone calls were going through to voicemail, and emails were bouncing back. A petition to wind up the company was lodged in October last year but a further hearing, in November, was adjourned.

Mr Qureshi is understood to be claiming to have severed involvement with the London Eye Hospital in 2015. But Companies House documents reveal he only stepped down as a director in May 2018, and patients reported to The Mail on Sunday that they had seen him for consultations there in 2016.

A spokesman for Mr Qureshi said he 'strongly denies all of the allegations... and fully expects to be exonerated by the GMC. The EyeMax Mono lens has been used in over 3,000 implantations by a hundred surgeons in 25 countries and the product's effectiveness is supported by published, peer-reviewed clinical data from over 500 patients'.