**ABTA and its Members fight against fraudulent holiday sickness claims**

ABTA, the UK’s leading travel trade association, is working with its Members to fight against the growing problem of fraudulent claims made in relation to British holidaymakers falling ill on package holidays. Data from ABTA Members show a 400% rise in the number of holiday sickness claims made since 2013, yet sickness levels reported in resort have remained stable.

ABTA has called on the UK Ministry of Justice to change the law to make it harder for law firms and claims management companies to profit from fraudulent or exaggerated holiday sickness claims.  Under the current UK law there is no set limit for lawyers’ fees regarding personal injuries that happen overseas. This means that it is often more expensive for a UK tour operator or foreign hotel to defend a fraudulent claim than it is to settle with the claimant. ABTA has called for a rule to be introduced to limit the legal fees that solicitors can charge for overseas personal injury claims, for people claiming awards of up to £25,000.

ABTA has also asked legal regulators in the UK to take action against claims firms that are encouraging holidaymakers to make fraudulent or exaggerated claims. ABTA has provided the regulators with evidence showing the growth and volume of claims to help them take action. The Claims Management Regulator is now carrying out an official investigation into this issue.

In addition to calling for legal change, ABTA is working to advise its Members and hotels on how to minimise the potential for claims. ABTA organised a seminar in February to advise tour operators and hotels on the best way to address this issue. This includes keeping accurate records of hygiene procedures, which helps to defend cases in court, as well as ways to identify false claims from genuine ones.

The firms that are encouraging these fraudulent claims contact customers by phone or on social media, telling people that if they have fallen ill on a package holiday in the last three years, they are entitled to compensation because the travel industry has set up a fund to pay customers. There is no such fund and many people do not realise that this will actually cost their tour operator and the hotel where they stayed, thousands of pounds and Euros. These costs will eventually be borne by other, future customers.

Mark Tanzer ABTA Chief Executive said: “Spain is the biggest destination for the British travel industry and we are very worried about the damage fraudulent holiday sickness claims are causing to the reputation of all British holidaymakers, the vast majority of whom would never submit a false claim, as well as the cost to industry. We are employing a number of approaches to address this problem. These include calling for changes to the law, working with regulators to crackdown on illegal practices and giving advice to hoteliers and tour operators on record keeping in resort. It is unacceptable that dishonest firms are able to profit from encouraging fraudulent claims.”

**24 April 2017**

**For further information contact:**

Gillian Edwards, Senior Public Relations Manager, tel: 020 3117 0514

Sean Tipton, Media Relations Manager, tel: 020 3117 0513

Daisy Parker, PR and Campaigns Manager, tel: 020 3117 0531

Out of Hours: Contact the Duty Press Officer via pager: 07659 190 987

E-mail: press@abta.co.uk

Web: [www.abta.com](http://www.abta.com)

Twitter: @ABTAtravel

ABTA has been a trusted travel brand for over 65 years. Our purpose is to help our Members to grow their businesses successfully and sustainably, and to help their customers travel with confidence.

The ABTA brand stands for support, protection and expertise. This means consumers have confidence in ABTA and a strong trust in ABTA Members. These qualities are core to us as they ensure that holidaymakers remain confident in the holiday products that they buy from our Members.We help our Members and their customers navigate through today's changing travel landscape by raising standards in the industry; offering schemes of financial protection; providing an independent complaints resolution service should something go wrong; giving guidance on issues from sustainability to health and safety and by presenting a united voice to government to ensure the industry and the public get a fair deal.

ABTA currently has around 1,200 Members, with a combined annual UK turnover of £32.07 billion. For more details about what we do, what being an ABTA Member means and how we help the British public travel with confidence visit [www.abta.com](http://www.abta.com).