PETALING JAYA: When Rani (not her real name) saw that her hair was thinning out because of a medical condition, she turned to a hair loss treatment centre for help.

Little did she know that after a year of treatment, she would end up with a RM36,000 bill.

<The consultants tried aggressively to convince me to commit to their package and charged me RM12,000 when I first signed up,< said the health practitioner, who is in her 40s.

However, she had to fork out more money than expected when the consultants scared her into buying additional packages.

<During my weekly appointments, they would use a scanner to take a picture of my scalp and point out patches supposedly caused by fungal infection,< she said.

<They said it would worsen if I did not take a certain product.<

She added that they had no fixed price listing for the product, as it was sold to her for RM10,000 once and at RM3,000 another time.

Rani said the treatment on her daughter also turned awry, worsening her hair loss.

<We visited a skin specialist, who told us that our scalps had no fungal infections,< she said.

Another customer, who did not wish to be named, said she faced a similar problem when the centre<s consultants brought out the scanner to coax her into signing up for other packages.

<They used the scanned pictures to show me that I had a lot of dandruff and needed other treatments to fix my problem,< she said, adding that she then signed up for another 15 sessions.

The 52-year-old retiree said she had a few sessions left in her package, but her hair loss had not improved.

The National Consumer Complaints Centre (NCCC), when contacted, said it received 1,656 complaints regarding haircare treatments in 2015 when such complaints were specially categorised.

Its legal and policy senior manager Shabana Naseer said they made up 89.6% of 1,848 complaints recorded by NCCC that year.

She advised consumers to think carefully before signing up for any haircare package.

<NCCC received many complaints about sales tactics by beauticians, some of whom criticised the customer<s appearance to make them feel insecure so that they would sign up for the package,< she said, adding that customers should not buy products out of fear of offending the salesperson.

<One should not be bought in by methods used by sales personnel, and customers must lodge a report immediately upon any misconduct done by the centre,< she said.

She also called upon the relevant government authorities and regulators such as the Health Ministry, the Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry and the Companies Com<mission of Malaysia to monitor and ensure that hair treatment centres were run only by qualified professionals.