

**Burns suffered in sauna dome**  
**16HDC00466, 22 June 2017**

*Complementary treatment provider ~ Student ~ Sauna Dome ~ Informed consent*

A man was diagnosed with prostate cancer and metastatic lung disease. The man consulted with his general practitioner and received a number of complementary therapies. The man also consulted with a complementary treatment provider who was learning various complementary health treatments, including the far-infra-red sauna dome and its use in hyperthermia treatment.

The man was aware that the provider was new to providing hyperthermia treatment and had provided the treatment to only one other person. Before receiving treatment in the sauna dome, the provider asked the man to consult with his doctor to ascertain whether it was safe for him to have the treatment. The man also completed a consent form for the sauna dome treatment which stated that the provider was a student. The man received two sessions in a sauna dome. During the second treatment, the man indicated that he was uncomfortable and asked to get out of the sauna dome. After the treatment the man developed severe burns on his buttocks.

The Deputy Commissioner stated that while she accepts that the provider made efforts to provide the man with information about the treatment, she has reservations about the way in which the information was provided. The Deputy Commissioner stated that it is not good practice to assume that a patient has been informed adequately by way of seeking advice from another practitioner. The provider could not have been aware of what information was provided to the man by his doctor, or whether the man understood it fully. The Deputy Commissioner expressed concern that the provider did not recognise her responsibility to ensure that her client was well informed. The Deputy Commissioner also noted that it is unwise to provide information about treatment on the same day on which the treatment is provided.

The Deputy Commissioner was also concerned that the provider's lack of experience in using the sauna dome meant that she did not immediately recognise and respond to the man's distress when he stated that he wanted to get out of the sauna dome.

The provider informed HDC that she sold her sauna dome and does not intend to offer the service again. The Deputy Commissioner recommended that the provider provide a written apology to the man.

The advice given by the doctor was reasonable in the circumstances. However, the Deputy Commissioner commented about the lack of clinical notes taken by the doctor about his discussions with the man. The doctor told HDC that he accepts that his notes were inadequate, and has changed his practice so that he no longer has "ad hoc" consultations.