



**Beauty clinic breaches Code for poor care standards, Deputy Health and Disability  
Commissioner finds  
21HDC02297**

A woman's rights under the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights were breached by a beauty clinic said the Deputy Health and Disability Commissioner in a decision released today.

Dr Vanessa Caldwell found the woman had experienced significant harm from a thermal shock lipolysis (TSL) treatment. During the final stage of the treatment, the TSL machine overheated, causing a severe third-degree burn on the woman's abdomen. This injury required a skin graft and resulted in a week-long hospital stay.

Dr Caldwell's investigation identified several systemic issues that contributed to the incident, noting that the clinic provided an inadequate response when the woman first reported extreme pain and the beauty therapist was uncertain about the correct action to take. In addition, the clinic's first aid response was insufficient as the woman was given an ice pack for the burn, rather than running water as recommended by Hato Hone St John.

Dr Caldwell found the clinic's procedure for TSL treatment was inadequate, as it lacked critical precautionary information about use of the TSL machine and guidance on responding to a client's pain and providing first aid.

"The procedure did not include necessary precautions and instructions, which could have mitigated the risk of injury," Dr Caldwell said.

She was also critical of the clinic's risk management, noting that despite a previous incident where a staff member was burned by the TSL machine the clinic continued to use it without putting in place adequate safety measures.

The report outlines several recommendations to the clinic to prevent any similar incidents in future.

18 November 2024

**Editor's notes**

Please only use the photo provided with this media release. For any questions about the photo, please contact the communications team.

The full report of this case can be viewed on HDC's website - see HDC's '[Latest Decisions](#)'.

Names have been removed from the report to protect privacy of the individuals involved in this case.

The Commissioner will usually name group providers and public hospitals found in breach of the Code unless it would not be in the public interest or would unfairly compromise the privacy interests of an individual provider or a consumer. More information for the media, including HDC's naming policy and why we don't comment on complaints, can be found on our website [here](#).

HDC promotes and protects the rights of people using health and disability services as set out in the [Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights](#) (the Code).

In 2022/23 HDC made 592 quality improvement recommendations to individual complaints and we have a high compliance rate of around 96%.

Health and disability service users can now access an [animated video](#) to help them understand their health and disability service rights under the Code.

[Read our latest Annual Report 2023](#)

Learn more: [Education Publications](#)

**For more information contact:**

*Communications team, Health and Disability Commissioner*

Email: [communications@hdc.org.nz](mailto:communications@hdc.org.nz), Mobile: +64 (0)27 432 6709