



English 'roses' - a cautionary tale

Dr Katarzyna Mackenzie is one of New Zealand's few female plastic surgeons. She has worked in London with Niall Kirkpatrick, a plastic surgeon and a driving force behind changing legislation in the United Kingdom. Mackenzie has assisted Hart by putting her in touch with Kirkpatrick for advice on how to achieve better industry regulations in New Zealand.

"The UK market was worse than New Zealand," Mackenzie tells the Herald. "Anybody can do dermal fillers or Botox. So they were working really, really hard to protect the patients from rough practitioners or beauticians who would be doing these procedures in their kitchen, for example."

And while dermal fillers are under the Medsafe microscope, Mackenzie also points to the concern that there is currently no age limit on cosmetic injectables in New Zealand. Until very recently, this was also the case in the UK.

In an article for The Telegraph, Celia Wade describes standing behind a UK school girl in a queue and recalls her horrified reaction when the girl turned to reveal "not a child's face ... or even a teenager's, but an Instagram face, a Love Island face, complete with heavy 'microbladed' brows and bruised and bloated lips. A face that, by the age of 15 or 16, had already been desecrated by cosmetic surgery."

According to the Telegraph, "41,000 procedures such as lip fillers were carried out on kids in 2020 alone". But from October a ban was announced on Botox and fillers for under-18s in the

UK.

In New Zealand, an untrained practitioner is known to have used filler on a 16-year-old school student.

"That boundary, that unwise treatment, is what we're concerned about. We don't believe that's in the best interest of patients either," says Hart.

Mackenzie explains that "both the physical and mental development in a child is not complete.

"If you have a 14-year-old, they should not be seeking cosmetic treatment that puts them at risk of infections, unnecessary scarring, problems with blood supply to tissue from fillers, or blindness, which is the worst-case scenario. The consequences can be quite devastating. They are rare but they are still there."

Even if a teen was to undergo cosmetic enhancements, Mackenzie says it's not a decision that's appropriate for a child to make. "Young people cannot make a decision due to their levels of maturity. But because of social media, we are seeing these Kylie Jenner packages, Kim Kardashian packages out there."

However, as Hart points out, "if, in the case of the 16-year-old Kiwi with lip fillers, they have no complaints as a patient, there's very little that can be done.

"If the patient doesn't complain, it's very difficult to do something, because of the legislation at the moment. There's nothing that prohibits cosmetic injectables on anyone under the age of 18. We would say it's unethical and inappropriate and our [NZSCM] members would not be allowed to but then there are a lot of injectors out there who aren't our members."

As Mackenzie puts it, "the new law is required to protect young people from harm. The regulation must be tightened in regards to what qualifications people need to have and what training they need to have."

New Zealand Medical Association chair, Alistair Humphrey, says it's "absolutely" a concern he holds as well. "Botox is a drug and the guidelines of the drug should be followed. And as I understand it, it should be given to adults only. To give it to what are effectively children, I believe is unethical."