

Sunbeds in New Zealand

About skin cancer

- Commonly classified as cutaneous melanoma and keratinocytic cancers.
- 80% of all cancers diagnosed are skin cancers— melanoma is the 3rd most commonly registered cancer for both men and women.
- Occurs when skin cells are damaged — usually from over exposure to ultra-violet radiation (UVR) from the sun or sunbeds.

The skin cancer burden

- Each year skin cancer results in:
 - Approximately 500 deaths (356 from melanoma in 2013).
 - Over 90,000 cases of keratinocytic cancers.
- NZ & Australia have highest rates of melanoma in the world.
- As many skin cancers are treated in the private sector, the total economic burden of treatment in NZ is currently not known. Australia, which has a proportionally similar burden of skin cancer (but 5 times the population) spends \$904 million annually treating skin cancer.

Risk associated with sunbed use

- There is very strong scientific evidence demonstrating an association between sunbed use and development of skin cancers.
- The scientific evidence estimates that sunbed use prior to age 35 elevates the risk of developing melanoma by as much as 59%.

- It has been estimated that 3.2% of melanomas in Australia and 5.4% in Europe are caused by exposure to sunbeds.
- There is no safe level of use of sunbeds for people of any age and UVR is certainly not received in a controlled or safe way.
- The latest international evidence on sunbeds provides an estimate that their UV emission correspond to a UV index of 12—which is equivalent to midday summer sun in the northern regions of NZ.
- Because you do not generally wear clothing in a sunbed you are exposing more surface area of skin to UVR than you would typically when out in the sunlight.
- Areas of the body not usually exposed to UVR (such as soles of the feet) are also exposed, unlike when you are out in the sunlight.

NZ Standard for operators

- There is a voluntary standard for sunbed operators—however many operators have been repeatedly shown to fail to comply with this.
- Annual inspections of sunbed operators are carried out by Public Health Units around NZ and 'Consumer' annually undertakes 'secret shopper' surveys.
- In 2011, the Commerce Commission cautioned the indoor tanning industry about overstating the benefits of sunbed use and understating the risks. Despite this directive, some sunbed operators continue to claim health benefits.

What about personal choice?

- The well-being of the community has to be balanced against an individual's right to access a potentially harmful, discretionary cosmetic service.
- Skin cancer is a serious health issue in NZ and the cause is almost entirely preventable by reducing excessive UVR exposure.
- Currently businesses are allowed to operate a cosmetic service that exposes customers to a Type 1 carcinogen (UVR), a known risk factor for skin cancer, for financial gain.
- Some of these businesses are also offering anti-ageing treatments that reduce the evidence of sun damage alongside sunbed services which are known to contribute to 'skin ageing'.

Myth busters about sunbeds

- A base tan will protect you from damage—Laboratory testing has shown that a 'base tan' is equivalent of an SPF of about 3—it does not reduce the risk of sunburn from sunlight and may increase it by giving a false sense of protection.
- Sunbeds are beneficial for vitamin D production—Vitamin D levels are increased by regular, short exposure to UVR. Extended exposure results in only small incremental increases, but greater skin cancer risk.
- Sunbeds are beneficial for treatment of skin complaints—skin complaints are clinical conditions which should be treated under the supervision of medical professionals in a controlled setting.
- "Having a sunbed makes me feel good"—this may be linked to feeling more attractive. It may also be that endogenous brain opioids are created when using a sunbed leading to a sense of well-being. It is not associated with being 'healthy', sunbed use is a known risk factor for skin cancer.

Would a ban on commercial sunbeds result in a loss of jobs?

- In 2016 SBRU conducted a nationwide survey of all businesses that could potentially provide sunbed services (solariums, beauty salons, hairdressers, gyms and other fitness centres)
- For over 90% of businesses tanning services were supplementary to other services (hairdressers, beauty salons and gyms)
- Only 13 businesses relied on indoor tanning as their sole source of tanning and 9 of these also offered spray tanning services.
- Only 4 businesses relied solely on sunbeds for their business.

Australians show us the way

- Australian politicians weighed up the compelling scientific evidence for the association between skin cancer and sunbed use against the individuals right to choose and concluded there was a clear need for legislation.
- **Australia introduced a nationwide ban on all commercial sunbed services in 2014. Australians are no longer exposed to this unnecessary hazard.**

SBRU recommends that a ban be placed on the importation, manufacture, sale and rental of sunbeds for commercial or private use in NZ.

References

1. WHO (Accessed 4 August, 2017) WHO posters on sunbeds.
2. Cancer Society Social and Behavioural Research Unit (2016) *A burning issue? A submission on "Reducing Harm from Commercial Sunbeds"*.
3. Health Promotion Agency, Melnet (March, 2017) *New Zealand Skin Cancer Primary Prevention and Early Detection Strategy 2017 to 2022* Wellington.

Cancer Society Social and Behavioural Research Unit (www.otago.ac.nz/sbru/publications/otago068856.html#fact-sheets)

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