Complications following abdominoplasty (07HDC07867, 11 September 2008)

General surgeon ~ Liposuction ~ Abdominoplasty ~ Recurrent haematoma ~ Rights 4(1), 4(2), 4(4), 4(5), 6(1), 7(1)

A woman complained that a general surgeon was slow to respond to complications following an abdominoplasty, and was annoyed at her for seeking a second opinion from a plastic surgeon. The general surgeon performed the abdominoplasty ten months after performing liposuction surgery on the woman's hips, abdomen and thighs. Shortly after the abdominoplasty, the woman developed a haematoma, which was initially managed conservatively, and then with two aspiration and two excision procedures over a period of six months. Although she did not suffer a recurrence of the haematoma, she was dissatisfied with the results of her abdominoplasty.

It was held that the surgeon was ill advised to perform liposuction or abdominoplasty surgery on the woman due to her obesity. She should have been informed of more suitable alternatives, and encouraged to lose weight. There were problems with the surgeon's operative technique for the abdominoplasty, and he did not manage postoperative complications appropriately. In these circumstances, he breached Rights 4(1), 4(2) and 4(4).

It was also held that he did not provide adequate information to make an informed choice or give informed consent for the liposuction and abdominoplasty surgery, or the remedial aspiration and excision procedures, and breached Rights 6(1) and 7(1). He did not keep clear, accurate and contemporaneous patient records of the standard expected of a registered doctor, and breached Right 4(2). He did not communicate with the woman's general practitioner to ensure quality and continuity of care, and accordingly breached Right 4(5).