



It's an exciting time in appearance medicine, with a number of groundbreaking treatments and procedures on the horizon. Here's what to look out for in the next year or so.

# THE FUTURE



## THINNER CHINS

Belkyra, or Kybella as it's known overseas, is a ground-breaking technique to reduce fat cells under the chin, and will finally be available in New Zealand later this year. It's a bio-active enzyme found naturally in the body – the same compound as bile – and destroys fat cells by breaking down the membrane that causes the cell to release fat, permanently.

Depending on each individual, a course of treatments is required and the reduction happens gradually. The injections may hurt a little so a local anaesthetic is administered. The treatment will cause some swelling but this is a good sign – “The process of taking the fat cell away creates inflammation in the area for a couple of weeks,” explains Dr Sarah Hart, a cosmetic clinician at Auckland's Skin Institute. “That's important for the process; it encourages the skin-repair cells that make collagen to make extra collagen. There will be a short period of inflammation and then the area shrinks down.”

“Imagine you had 1000 fat cells,” she explains. “One treatment would take away 200; another would take away 200 more and a third treatment would take away another 200, leaving you with 400. You don't want to take away so many that there are none left. You will now always have fewer fat cells in that area.”

Fat cells can increase in size but they don't increase in number. “We are born with fat cells and then a set number is laid down in puberty. After puberty the fat cells get larger with weight gain but they don't increase in number.”

Having a refined jawline is deemed attractive in both men and women and this procedure can help remove softness from this stubborn area. “People with double chins are not necessarily overweight,” says Dr Hart. “This isolated pocket of fat under the chin can happen to people in their twenties; no matter how skinny they might get, it doesn't go away.”

Sometimes soft chins are a result of being overweight, too, but it's very hard to shift weight from this particular area. “With ageing, the distribution of fat on our body changes and the pad under our chin can grow. We might lose it from cheeks or other areas. Fat redistributes itself around the body.”

The first treatments are yet to be carried out in New Zealand but Belkyra has proven very successful and popular overseas.

## SMOOTH COMPLEXIONS

Adding to the Juvederm family is Volite, a lighter hyaluronic acid designed for improving skin texture and reducing the appearance of acne scarring. “It's an innovative, injectable treatment, designed to improve skin quality,” says Dr Catherine Stone, founder of The Face Place in Auckland, which specialises in non-surgical cosmetic treatments. “It's not a dermal filler but rather a skin-conditioning

hyaluronic acid gel that is injected into the middle layers of the dermis, across many sites, to nourish skin from the inside out. Volite is suitable for all ages and skin types.”

## BEYOND BOTOX

“On the horizon, there are several new types of wrinkle-relaxing neuromodulators similar to Botox, some of which are rumoured to last longer,” says Dr Stone. “This may be due to the doses used in trials but we are keeping a close eye on them.”

## HANDS UP

One of the biggest indicators of age is our hands. Now there are treatments that can help improve their texture and appearance. “Hand rejuvenation is a big topic this year,” Dr Stone says. “Both filler (for replacing volume loss in ‘scrawny hands’) and PRP (platelet-rich plasma) for regenerating and rejuvenating the skin on hands and fingers, have been shown to give a more youthful appearance to the hands.” The Face Place is already working in this area and expects demand to increase in the next year.

## LUSH LADIES

A lot of progress has occurred in the area of sexual rejuvenation, and Dr Stone says filler is becoming a popular choice. “I attended an excellent presentation on the use of filler and PRP into the labia majora (the ‘outer lips’ of the female intimate area), which are mainly fat pads that shrink as we age, in a similar way to the fat pads of the cheeks. In time, the reduction in size of the majora often leads to a saggier appearance and makes the labia minora (inner lips) more obvious. It is a simple process to refill the labia majora, giving a more youthful appearance, and also often reducing how visible the labia minora have become, an appearance that many women are quietly concerned about as they get older.”

## VIRTUAL SURGERY

Turns out there might be valuable uses for virtual reality and augmented reality beyond gaming! Dr Stone attended the International Masters Congress on Ageing Skin (IMCAS) in Paris and learned more about the exciting future of medical training.

“Professor Alberto Rancati is the Director for Plastic Surgery Training at UCSD and is collaborating with Google to develop a future-focused training facility. He has an existing surgical facility with a 23-bed ‘operating room’ full of simulation models, robotic assistants and real-life training tools.

“He spoke about training using 3D anatomy holograms without having to do actual cadaver dissection,” says Dr Stone. “Virtual reality and augmented reality training is where surgeons (and hopefully injectors) can train on a hologram model, and also access remote guidance and ‘telementoring’ from top doctors and trainers in their field.

“Professor Rancati believes robots will become a much bigger part of clinical practice, as they allow us to have much greater precision, as well as reducing risks. In the near future we'll have the amazing opportunity to practise and refine our skills through simulation and virtual reality before we even touch our first real patient.” ■

# IS NOW