

The changing face of cosmetic surgery

The cosmetic industry was probably invented after the first wrinkle appeared. Since then the market has been flooded with various "miracle" creams, potions and lotions to rejuvenate aging skin. Although historically surgery has always been the final alternative there is a new procedure in town that is taking away the fear for those seeking facial rejuvenation. The reason for this change of heart? The introduction of the laser, which is looking a lot more appealing to many people than traditional surgery.

The 1970s saw the popularization of the surgical face-lift. Its goal was to have one major operation to wipe away aging changes. The procedure known as a "rhytidectomy," however, can have many complications, a long recuperation time and the results can be more pronounced than desired. Also, the presence of scars can be very problematic and difficult to hide. Things are now changing dramatically in cosmetic surgery.

Lawrence D. Castleman, M.D., director of the LaserGraft Ctr. for Cosmetic Surgery in Troy, remarks that the traditional face-lift has substantial risk associated with it and the results may be quite temporary, lasting about five years. "Remembering Newton's law of motion," says Castleman, "for every action there's an opposite and equal reaction. In other words what has been pulled, like a rubber band, will return to its original sagging state." The face-lift, as we all know it, consists of cutting the skin and adjacent tissues, stretching and reconnecting them higher on the face. The skin is the same, still old and weather-beaten as before, the only difference being that it is on the stretch. Lasers, on the other hand, rejuvenate skin itself, thus working on the actual problem.

Over four hundred rejuvenations have been performed at the



Dr. Castleman with patient Bobbie Cooksey at LaserGraft Center.

LaserGraft Ctr. Castleman, a frequent instructor in laser technique surgery at the center, has been impressed with

high energy pulses of focused light which is controlled by a computerized delivery system. Unlike older techniques, the laser actually causes the

proteins of the skin to regenerate as in youth. The laser induces a regrowth of normal collagen within the skin and improves its elasticity. This explains why wrinkles disappear. Castleman likens the new skin's texture to being "as smooth as a baby's bottom."

Before rushing out to the nearest cosmetic surgeon, Dr. Daniel Kozlow, an ophthalmic surgeon, offers a caveat: "Although lasers give excellent results, it isn't possible for one laser to do everything." Dr. Kozlow performs rejuvenation of the eyelids with the UltraPulse laser, but uses the Ruby laser to rid patients of dark circles under the eyes. Dr. Castleman agrees stating that numerous lasers are necessary to comprehensively treat all the cosmetic problems that appear at the clinic.

"For example if your problem is blood vessels on your nose and face, this would not be treated with the same laser that is used for wrinkles. Unless you use the laser that was designed for that specific problem, the results are just not going to be as good."

There are several new and exciting applications for the lasers. The best known, the UltraPulse, not only cures wrinkles but has recently known to be 85% effective in curing snoring, and relieving problems associated with sleep apnea. This laser has also been used extensively to treat facial and acne scars. Another laser, the Yellow Dye, rids the body of unwanted superficial blood vessels and has recently been shown to radiate or reduce stretch-marks. Equally exciting has been the recent approval by the FDA of the Excimer laser, used by Dr. Donald Flander of the LaserGraft Ctr., to cure nearsightedness. While the 'Fountain of Youth' hasn't yet arrived, new laser technology provides us with a tantalizing sip.



Dr. Castleman at Castleman Center with Shari MacKellar, having dark circles removed with the ruby laser.