

les nouvelles *esthétiques*

AMERICAN EDITION

LNE—the magazine for skin care and spa professionals

September 2002

\$7.50





Dermatology Update

by Dr. Debra Price

Questions and Answers

Facelift scars

I had a facelift two years ago and am pleased with my results, but have been left with white scars that are visible when I pull my hair back. Is there anything that can be done for this?

Yes, the 308 eximer laser is the first laser that has been shown to be effective in repigmenting facial scars, stretch marks and loss of pigment secondary to laser resurfacing. Patients generally require between five to 10 treatments. The treatments are not painful and no anesthesia is required. There is also no downtime following treatment.

Cancer prevention

Is there any evidence that products other than sunscreens may be beneficial in preventing skin cancer?

There is some evidence that genistein, an antioxidant derived from soy, may help prevent skin cancer. In animal studies, topical genistein prevented tumors and photoaging when applied before or immediately after exposure to cancer producing agents. Other plant products, such as extracts of green tea, milk thistle and grape seed may also be preventive, but this remains to be proven.

A bacterial enzyme, T4 endonuclease V has been shown to decrease the incidence of actinic keratoses (pre-cancerous skin lesions) and basal cell skin cancers in individuals with xeroderma pig-

Done properly, intralesional steroids, can hasten resolution of cystic lesions and thus lessen scarring. If too high a dose of cortisone is injected, it is possible to cause atrophy (depression) of the skin. This usually improves over time and can be avoided with proper dosing.

mentosa, a genetic condition in which a DNA repair defect leads to early and excessive numbers of skin cancer. Although not yet studied in normal populations or commercially available, this agent is very promising in the future prevention of skin cancer.

Finally, there is some suggestion that Cox 2 inhibitors (i.e. Celebrex, Vioxx) may decrease tumor production in animals exposed to ultraviolet light. While not yet approved for this indication, they may be useful in the treatment of high risk patients in the future.

The stress factor

Is there any relation between stress and acne?

Probably. There is evidence that stress causes release of hormones that stimulate oil glands and possibly exacerbate acne. Individuals with a diathesis to acne should

consider incorporating stress reduction techniques, such as meditation, yoga, breathing exercises and physical exercise into their therapeutic regimen.

Laser acne treatments

Are there any laser treatments being used for skin with acne?

A recent study has shown dramatic improvement of acne after four treatments with the Smoothbeam 1450 nm laser. In this small study, 100 percent clearance of both inflammatory and noninflammatory acne lesions was achieved. It is hypothesized that the benefits were achieved through selective dermal heating of the sebaceous glands, but this remains to be proven. It also remains to be seen if these results can be replicated in a larger study treating larger areas.

Cortisone injections

In Grade 4 acne, cystic acne, I have heard that doctors can inject cortisone at the blemish site and the acne cyst will just dry up and go away with no scarring. Is this an accepted method of treatment for this type of acne? Are there any side effects from the cortisone?

Injection of low dose intralesional steroids is a useful adjunctive treatment in the management of cystic acne. Done properly, this procedure can hasten resolution of cystic acne.

tic lesions and thus lessen scarring. If too high a dose of cortisone is injected, it is possible to cause atrophy (depression) of the skin. This usually improves over time and can be avoided with proper dosing. Most individuals with cystic acne also require systemic and topical prescription acne therapy.

Hydrocortisone

Is it OK to put hydrocortisone on the face for sensitivity?

It is safe to intermittently use hydrocortisone for facial irritation or sensitivity, but chronic use is not advisable. Individuals with sensitive skin should consider avoiding ingredients that exacerbate sensitivity such as alcohol, propylene glycol, abrasive cleansers, glycolic acid and fragrance among others. The use of topical anti-inflammatory agents such as green tea may also be helpful.

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Blotchy tanner

Help! My client is blotchy with self tanner. It brought out all her freckles and she wants to lessen the tanner's intensity on her face. I heard lemon juice and a rough washcloth could help, what should I tell her?

Self tanners contain dihydroxyacetone, an ingredient that stains the stratum corneum or dead skin layer. Any agent which exfoliates the skin will hasten resolution of the tan created by a self tanner. Exfoliation with a rough washcloth

can be helpful. I would not recommend using lemon juice since this can cause irritation and postinflammatory hyperpigmentation. If you perform microdermabrasion, you may also consider performing this procedure on your client to facilitate physically exfoliating her tan. ■

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