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dermatology update

by Dr. Debra Price

Questions and Answers

New, FDA-approved cream

Can you tell me about the new topical drug, Avage?

Avage (tazarotene 1 percent cream) was recently approved by the FDA for treatment of fine facial wrinkling, mottled hypo- and hyperpigmentation (blotchy skin discoloration) and facial lentiginosities (brown spots). This topical retinoid is effective in treating these signs of photoaging. It should be prescribed in coordination with sun avoidance. Some patients experience exfoliation and erythema (skin redness) when beginning treatment. The addition of a moisturizer, decreasing the frequency of use and avoidance of other exfoliants generally controls these reactions. Avage is also contraindicated in pregnant patients.

Benefits of copper

Have you used products made with copper peptide on your patients? What have their results been like?

Copper has become a popular ingredient in cosmeceutical facial and eye creams. It has been touted to reduce wrinkles, is a catalyst for antioxidants and has been shown to promote wound healing. In one study, facial cream containing GHK copper complex significantly improved the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. Of course, the importance of prevention through the daily use of a broad spectrum sunscreen cannot be overemphasized.

Radiofrequency treatment

I have recently heard about a new radiofrequency device that can improve facial wrinkles and tighten skin without a face lift. Do you know anything about it?

Thermage is a radiofrequency device that was recently FDA approved for the treatment of wrinkles and has been shown to improve wrinkles and even elevate brows without surgery. Preliminary studies have also demonstrated a benefit in tightening cheeks and even lifting the breast and nipple.

Eye color and cataracts

I have always thought that individuals with dark eyes were less likely to develop skin cancer and cataracts but recently heard otherwise; what's true?

Sunlight is known to be the major environmental risk factor for skin cancer. Both the amount and intensity of your lifetime sun exposure play key roles in determining your risk for melanoma. Genetic makeup is also important in determining melanoma risk. People with a family history of melanoma or atypical moles, light colored hair or eyes and or fair skin are also at increased risk. However, new Australian research shows that people with dark brown eyes may be at greater risk for developing cataracts than people with lighter eyes. Reducing eye exposure to sunlight is as important for people with dark irises as for those with lighter irises.

Alternative acne treatment

What can you tell me about a new light I heard is being used to treat acne?

A new high-intensity, narrow-band, blue light known as Clearlight was recently FDA approved for treatment of moderate inflammatory acne. The blue light at 410-420nm is the optimal wavelength to excite the porphyrins produced by propionibacterium acnes, destroy the bacteria and improve acne. Treatment is recommended for 15 minutes, twice a week, for four weeks. Since Clearlight uses visible light it does not increase the risk of skin cancer.

Chocolate and skin

Valentine's day is this month—does chocolate cause acne?

Contrary to popular belief, there is no evidence that eating chocolate or greasy foods increases acne breakouts. ■

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