



medical | rejuvenation: is it ever too early to start?

by Ada Polla Tray

I had my first facial at age 14. My first Botox® injection at age 25. And today, at age 30, I still can't get a drink without getting carded. Am I alone? No. Product lines aimed at tweens are emerging. Spas are targeting an ever younger clientele—witness teen spas and spa treatments and offerings encouraging mothers to come in with their daughters. This trend is affecting the realm of medical esthetics also. Indeed, recent data by the Millennium Research Group (MRG) suggests that more young people than ever before are expected to receive botulinum toxin and hyaluronic acid injections in 2008.

They are getting younger

Earlier this spring, the MRG conducted a detailed survey focused on facial esthetic procedures during the 2008 American Academy of Dermatology conference in San Antonio, TX. More than 60 U.S.-based dermatologists who frequently performed dermal filler and botulinum toxin procedures participated. Results of this study, found in MRG's U.S. Dermatologist Survey: the Facial Aesthetic Procedures and Product Trends 2008 report concluded that dermatologists expect more young patients to undergo botulinum toxin and hyaluronic acid treatments in 2008 than in 2007.

Physicians expect that patients aged 26 to 35 will represent more than 20 percent of total botulinum toxin patients in 2008, compared to a 2007 proportion of 6 percent. The 46 to 55 age range, and to a lesser extent the 36 to 45 demographic, is expected to represent a smaller propor-

tion of total botulinum toxin patients, as their younger counterparts increasingly obtain esthetic injections.

The rationale behind early botulinum toxin injections is that preventing your muscles from contracting will delay (maybe even prevent) the appearance of frown lines if they are not already present. Botox thus becomes a fabulous age-prevention tool. Jaya Classen, senior analyst at MRG, confirms, "Facial esthetic companies are increasingly positioning their products as preventive anti-aging measures. The idea is that if you use botulinum toxin earlier in life, you will prevent wrinkles rather than using the botulinum toxin when you already have the wrinkles."

Physicians are also expecting the proportion of hyaluronic acid patients in the 18 to 25 age group to rise over 2007. Although hyaluronic acid is traditionally used for wrinkle reduction, younger patients will increasingly undergo hyaluronic acid procedures for lip plumping and facial augmentation indications.

Prevention, not treatment

In the case of hyaluronic acid, as in the case of botulinum toxin, there are preventative advantages to starting use earlier rather than later. Indeed, injecting hyaluronic acid increases the hydration and water content of the deep dermis, and as such the quality of the extracellular matrix. And a better working, extra-cellular matrix is more readily able to work against the signs of skin aging, as there is a more effective interaction among cells. Finally, studies have shown that when hyaluronic acid is injected,



the surrounding fibroblasts evolve to become more active, which translates into increased production of collagen and endogenous hyaluronic acid.

Beyond preventative benefits, botulinum toxin and hyaluronic injections of course bring cosmetic benefits as well. Like getting carded in your 30s every time you order a drink. ■

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