thefaceessentials

Minneapolis dermatologist **Charles Crutchfield MD** explains the importance of utilizing wrinkle treatments and dermal fillers to rejuvenate the face.

The field of minimally invasive cosmetic dermatology has grown exponentially over the last three years,' says Dr Charles Crutchfield, Clinical Associate Professor of Dermatology at the University of Minnesota Medical School. 'When the field first started 15 to 20 years ago, there were some very good companies, such as NeoStrata and SkinCeuticals, which made high-quality products that did a very nice job. That was helpful to the development of the field because it gave cosmetic dermatology patients confidence in the results that could be obtained.'

He says as time went on medicines were developed that allowed even better rejuvenation of the face and for Dr Crutchfield the real champion was Botox. 'Physicians started using Botox around 1994, and the nice thing with the product is it's been in use around the world for about 10 years now and tens of millions of treatments have been performed with no lasting adverse affects. This is a high-quality product that also produces dramatic results at affordable prices and has an excellent safety profile.'

Botox is a genetically engineered and purified enzyme that acts to relax muscles in a non-permanent manner. Dr Crutchfield says this is the reason it can be so effective if you create lines in your face from being an expressive person or smiling or frowning a lot; it can relax the muscles that cause unwanted lines and wrinkles so they fade away.

'One of the concerns many patients have is about the length of time Botox lasts,' he explains. 'They say, 'Well, I don't want to use Botox because I need to repeat it two to three times a year.' But different patients actually use Botox differently. Some patients use it just before a big event such as a wedding, school reunion or special family photograph. Others use it two to three times a year to maintain a line-free state. I explain to my patients that even though Botox doesn't last forever, neither does a nice haircut. It's really all about maintenance.'

The areas Botox works very well in are: the forehead, the frown lines between the eyes, the smile lines at the sides of the eyes and also to some degree smoker's lines around mouth. It lasts four to six months and most of Dr Crutchfield's patients come back regularly for treatment. He explains the more often patients have it the less they need to be treated: 'I have patients from late 1990s who now only require treatment once a year.'

There are some short-term side effects that may occur in a small percentage of people. Dr Crutchfield says these include slight bruising, short-lived mild headaches and in about one in a thousand cases a mild eyelid droop that can last a week or two. He adds some patients may complain of mild cold-like symptoms for a day or two but this is very rare, occurring in only one in 500 patients.

Unfortunately a lot of the medicines that are used to treat lines and wrinkles in motion (like Botox) will help with lines at rest to a small degree but not completely. As a result a complementary treatment is needed that utilizes filling agents to smooth out the lines and winkles that are constantly present.

Dr Crutchfield says there are a wide variety of agents that work exceptionally well in association with Botox. One of these is Restylane.

Restylane is a sugar-based gel that goes by the chemical name hyaluronic acid. Hyaluronic acid is a natural product that occurs in human skin and is one of the natural fluids found in our bodies. It is one of the structural products that gives cells support, for example it gives shape to the human eye.

Dr Crutchfield says that because it is a natural substance the incidence of allergy to hyaluronic acid is almost non-existent: 'Restylane doesn't need allergy testing because it doesn't have any protein content.

'Hyaluronic acid is naturally produced in the body and naturally broken down. Now companies have learned to cross-link the molecules so it doesn't break down as rapidly. As a result hyaluronic acid can last from six to 12 months, which is much longer than protein fillers.

'Some of my patients say they would prefer some sort of permanent filler to Restylane, which only lasts a year. But it is important for patients to know that the human face changes over time. If you put something permanent into it, the result may look nice now but it could look quite odd in five years time. The product may not change as they do'.

Dr Crutchfield says another important factor is that over time the lower half of the face (from the nose down, around the mouth and including the lips) loses volume. He explains psychological studies have been performed trying to figure out how people identify someone as looking old: 'The researchers do this by working out how much volume has been lost in the human face. A natural, youthful appearance is associated with a round, plumper face and this can therefore be restored with a product such as hyaluronic acid.

'The filling agents are almost miraculous when filling lines on the cheeks, between the nose and the corner of the mouth, lines around mouth, frown lines between the eyebrows and are exceptional at rejuvenating and repairing the lips. I tell all my patients they can have lips that look like they when they were 18.'

'I prefer hyaluronic acid products because they go in smoothly, don't cause allergic reactions later, last longer

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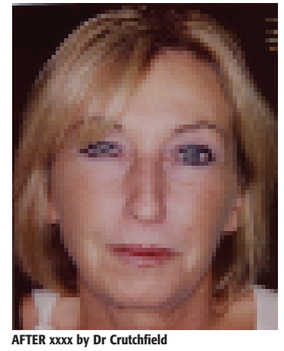
than most other fillers and have a lower side effect profile.'

He says the only caveat is that the most important thing about any cosmetic dermatological treatment is not necessarily the product being used but the physician administering it.

'Nothing beats experience. Oftentimes patients will overlook this most important fact and make a selection based on price alone. In fact price should actually be only one of many considerations. Safebotox.com is a website that provides a whole list of considerations and questions that should be considered.

'Both Botox and Restylane are extremely effective and very safe products and the bottom line is that patients love the results.' **cbm**

BEFORE xxxx by Dr Crutchfield



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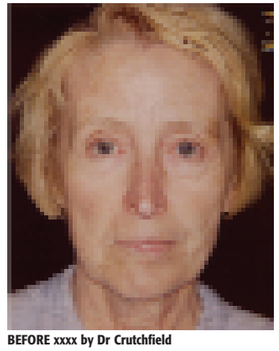

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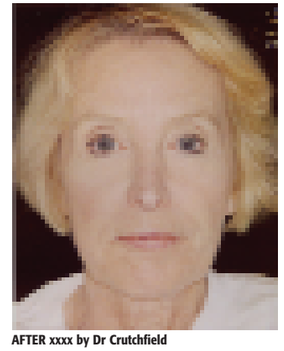

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