

Editorial

Glabellar Gala

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On April 15, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced the approval of Botulinum Toxin Type A (Botox® Cosmetic) to temporarily improve the appearance of moderate-to-severe frown lines between the eyebrows (glabellar lines).

Botulinum Toxin Type A was approved first in December 1989 to treat 2 eye muscle disorders (blepharospasm and strabismus) and in December 2000 to treat cervical dystonia, a disorder causing severe neck and shoulder contractions. Botox also is being investigated as a treatment for back pain, headaches, limb spasticity, and hyperhidrosis.

Prior to the FDA approval, Botox had been used off-label for cosmetic purposes. In a placebo-controlled, multicenter, randomized clinical trial involving a total of 405 patients with moderate-to-severe glabellar lines who were injected with Botox, data from both the investigators' and the patients' ratings of the improvement of the frown lines were evaluated. After 30 days, the majority of both groups rated frown lines as improved or non-existent. Very few patients in the placebo group saw similar improvement.

Following the approval, we have observed a media barrage concerning Botox, ranging from company-sponsored advertisements to a spoof on *Saturday Night Live* in May. The most controversial aspect of this media coverage has been the widespread news coverage that patients are attending "Botox parties" sponsored by physicians. While these parties, on the one hand, offer a relaxed

setting for friends to gather to receive their injections, there has been concern expressed regarding the appropriateness of these activities.

According to a statement issued by the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) on April 30, "Botulinum toxin treatments being performed in casual social settings rather than in a controlled medical environment contradicts the seriousness of this medical procedure."

Fred F. Castrow II, MD, President of the AAD, added the following: "A casual social activity for the purpose of administering botulinum toxin, such as a 'Botox party,' is an inappropriate and a potentially dangerous setting for performing medical procedures of any kind. Adding alcohol to the mix is a bad idea for a number of reasons, especially since bruising can be intensified."

Botulinum Toxin Type A is a valuable addition to our ability to address the cosmetic needs of our patients. In addition, this compound offers other potential benefits to our practices, such as the off-label treatment of hyperhidrosis. Although we welcome the new FDA approval, we agree with the AAD that patient safety comes first and should not be taken lightly under any circumstance. In addition, the procedure should be performed only by a qualified trained physician. When promoting Botox parties, healthcare professionals should carefully consider the message that this sends to the public about the integrity of their practices and respective specialties.