

Pneumatic Device Touted as Hair-Removal Pain Reliever

BY BETSY BATES
Los Angeles Bureau

SAN DIEGO — A novel pneumatic skin-flattening device may reduce the pain associated with laser or light-source hair removal treatments, although comprehensive data are not yet available to verify the results, said Dr. Gary Lask at the annual meeting of the California Society of Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery.

The device generates negative pressure of 600 mm Hg when the skin surface is elevated using compression and suction, which flattens the skin surface and causes expulsion of blood into surrounding tissues. This allows for less absorption of laser or light energy by competing chromophores during hair removal procedures, as well as the potential for less erythema, he explained. It appears to reduce pain “by way of the gate theory: afferent inhibition of sensory nerves of the dorsal

constitute a sizable proportion of the medicolegal cases Dr. Lask reviews each year. “Most of your complications are at higher energy levels. If you can theoretically get the same results with lower power, you should minimize your complications,” he said.

The pneumatic device, by better targeting hair follicles, might have the potential to accomplish this goal, he said. ■



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DR. ZACHARY

horn,” said Dr. Lask, director of dermatologic surgery and the dermatology laser center at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Patients treated with various hair removal sources and the adjunctive skin-flattening device had “no pain whatsoever” in Dr. Lask’s practice, even though no topical anesthetic was used, he said. Early results from Israeli researchers suggest that the device may produce “a little more efficacious” reduction of hair growth, less pain, and less erythema than hair removal devices can achieve on their own, he said.

Other surgeons at the conference expressed interest in the device’s mechanism of action, which they said makes more scientific sense than some explanations for how various light and energy sources and devices can supposedly plump, compress, and tighten skin; erase wrinkles; and remove cellulite. In a general overview of such devices, Dr. Christopher Zachary, professor and chair of dermatology at the University of California, Irvine, scoffed, “There is far too much sucking and blowing going on here.”

Dr. Lask good-naturedly encouraged Dr. Zachary to keep an open mind about the pneumatic skin-flattening device: “Just because a machine sucks doesn’t mean it doesn’t work.”

Dr. Lask disclosed that he has a commercial interest in the device’s manufacturer, Inolase Ltd. of Netanya, Israel. He chairs the company’s advisory board.

Hair removal remains a highly popular in-office cosmetic procedure, but it is not without drawbacks, including pain that can be considerable. Despite a generally safe track record, hair removal procedures

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†Final evaluation conducted 4 weeks after treatment completion or discontinuation; $P < .001$ vs vehicle; $P < .001$ vs 0.5% fluorouracil for 1 week; and $P = .016$ vs 0.5% fluorouracil for 2 weeks.

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References: 1. Carac® Prescribing Information, Dermik Laboratories, 2003. 2. Weiss J, Menter A, Hevia O, et al. Effective treatment of actinic keratosis with 0.5% fluorouracil cream for 1, 2, or 4 weeks. *Cutis*. 2002;70(2 suppl):22-29. 3. Jorizzo J, Stewart D, Bucko A, et al. Randomized trial evaluating a new 0.5% fluorouracil formulation demonstrates efficacy after 1-, 2-, or 4-week treatment in patients with actinic keratosis. *Cutis*. 2002;70:335-339.

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