

Newslinks for the week of April 21st:



Pursuit of youth isn't always pretty

Reality check on the war on wrinkles: Looking younger or just weirder?

By Julia Sommerfeld – Senior Health Editor

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Wrinkles have become optional. So have age spots, forehead furrows and baggy eyelids.

Name a badge of aging and there's a fix being peddled by your local dermatologist or plastic surgeon. Crow's feet? Freeze them with Botox. Laugh lines? Inject them with Restylane. Saggy neck? Tighten and tuck with a scalpel.

But is all this *really* making us look younger? Or just weirder?

Tamara O'Connor, 48, says the latest and greatest in the anti-aging armory helped her win the battle against wrinkles. But the victory was nothing to smile about.

A couple of summers ago, O'Connor visited a shiny new medical spa in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho for a consultation about the frown lines sprouting between her brows. She was starting to fret about such things since she'd recently gone through a divorce and was dating again.

After taking a series of close-up photos of O'Connor from every angle, the nurse proceeded to pick apart her every crease and crinkle. "I had never even noticed all this until they pointed it out. But after that I felt like jeez, I look old, I've got crow's feet and apparently the corners of my mouth droop; I need some serious help," recalls O'Connor, a project manager for an interior design company.

By the time she left, her face had been pumped full of \$1,500 worth of Botox and the wrinkle-plumper Restylane. Within a day, the corners of her eyes and mouth were frozen and her smile lines were vanquished.

“Oh my God, I looked like a zombie. It wasn’t my face anymore,” O’Connor says. “You know when you’re mad and somebody tells you to smile so you flash them that purposely fake smile, where your lips move but you keep the rest of your face frozen? Well, that’s what my smile looked like all the time.”

The field of cosmetic surgery is at its best when it comes to correcting perceived flaws, like a crooked nose, and enhancing assets, such as bust size. But replicating the look of youth seems to pose a more difficult challenge.

Plenty of people are looking tighter, yes. Wrinkle-free and smooth-skinned, indeed. But not exactly young — and increasingly, not exactly human.

“I didn’t look like a normal healthy person; I looked like I was wearing a strange mask,” O’Connor recalls of the nearly a year it took before all the wrinkle injections faded away.



JED CONKLIN

When her smile lines finally returned, she was happy to see them.

“I had always thought I would do anything to stop the hands of time, that I’d get rid of those wrinkles as soon they arrived, but this turned out to be

Tamara O’Connor, 48, of Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, embraced her lines and dropped out of the war on wrinkles after too much Botox and Restylane wiped away her facial expressions. “Literally, I had no smile,” she recalls. When the injections faded and her smile lines returned, she was happy to see them.

somewhat of a blessing because it showed me that wrinkles aren’t the enemy,” O’Connor says. “It was God’s way of telling me to let it go.”

Winning the battle, not the war

Plastic surgeons are among the first to admit that the pursuit of youth isn’t always pretty.

“We’ve all seen some bizarre-looking results ... the fish-lip syndrome, the over-Botoxed celebrity who looks like her forehead is made of porcelain, the brow lift that leaves somebody in a perpetual state of surprise ... or eyelid lifts that are so extreme that

somebody ends up looking like a cadaver," says Dr. Joseph Gyskiewicz, a cosmetic surgeon with a practice outside Minneapolis and a spokesperson for the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

Hollywood has long determined how we want to look when we walk out of the cosmetic surgeon's office, from Angelina Jolie-inspired lip plumping to Halle Berry's perfect little nose. But celebrities are also visible examples of surgery's shortcomings.

At 62, Priscilla Presley's once-stunning cheekbones are now buried in flesh that looks as puffed and wrinkle-free as a marshmallow. Country music star Kenny Rogers, 69, whose facial work has made him practically unrecognizable and oddly feminized, complained to People magazine that plastic surgery left him "too tight around the eyelids." And Courtney Love, 43, now on her second round of revision work to undo a series of procedures that left her face looking tight, lumpy and lopsided, wrote on her MySpace page: "I have to restore myself to not looking ridiculous."

But such cautionary tales aside, cosmetic surgery is more popular every year. Nearly 12 million cosmetic procedures were performed in 2007 — a 7 percent increase from 2006 and a 59 percent increase from 2000, according to the plastic surgery group. The staples of the age-defying arsenal — facelifts, eyelid tucks, Botox and injections of wrinkle-plumping substances — all rose last year.

Frozen is the new wrinkle

Through a combination of such procedures an ambitious surgeon can spackle, stuff and carve a face utterly devoid of lines. On shows like "The Real Housewives of Orange County," the 40-something moms have unlined faces while their teen daughters have smile crinkles.

An interesting side effect is that such faces can end up drawing even more attention to age in a what's-wrong-with-this-picture way. One immediately starts wondering: *How old is she, anyway?*

Among some circles — troupes of women in L.A., Dallas, Miami and Manhattan's Upper East Side — the cookie-cutter look of fillers and Botox has supplanted the natural marks of aging. These women don't get saggy, baggy and lined with age; they get ever smoother and expressionless.

Gyskiewicz says bad or "overdone" cosmetic surgery results are a matter of patients and doctors reaching too far and falling flat. "When people are trying to get rid of every wrinkle, when they're trying to look 25 when they're 60, that's when they overdo it and can look plastic," he says. "If you want to look natural, then less is more."

The problem with this, of course, is that moderation is about achieving moderate goals. And there's nothing moderate about freezing time.

The pressure women are feeling these days is not simply to look good for their age. Rather, it's not to age at all. (And the pressure is felt far more acutely among women. Of the 11.8 million cosmetic procedures performed in the U.S. in 2007, less than 10 percent were done on men.)

Maggie Little, a bioethicist at Georgetown University, worries that our culture is in a state of denial about aging.

"The notion of what we're supposed to look like comes from celebrities and it's really distorted," she says. "As a culture, we've developed this very narrowed view of beauty — only one decade, the 20s." We spend adolescence gearing up for this peak, Little says, and then we spend the rest of our lives trying to reclaim it.

And in some cases, the very 20s are being spent just trying to hold on.

Dr. Tina Alster, a dermatologist in Washington, D.C., says she's seeing more patients in their 20s and 30s coming in for "preventive" Botox — aimed at keeping wrinkles from forming in the first place. "They're starting to see when they squint or frown the lines stick around for awhile and they come in and say, 'I don't want to look like my mother.'"

Over the past couple of years Botox has become the most popular cosmetic procedure for female patients ages 19 to 35, with nearly 400,000 wrinkle-reversing (or preventing) treatments in 2007.

Last month, Rachel Cothran, 26, visited Alster for her very first Botox fix smack between her brows, where she was starting to notice the beginning traces of a furrow. "Nip it in the bud," she says. "Why wait until you're older and completely dissatisfied?"

Cothran, who considers preventive Botox "a no-brainer — like wearing sunscreen" says she and her friends are thinking about aging much earlier than their parents' generation. "Things are happening so much younger these days — 19-year-olds start companies like Facebook, and 26 doesn't feel like a spring chicken anymore, so there's pressure not to show your age even when you're still pretty young."

Losing the forest for the trees

The increasing obsession with perfectly smooth, unlined, ageless skin is reminiscent of what Dr. Katharine Phillips sees in her psychiatric practice that specializes in treating patients with body dysmorphic disorder (BDD). These patients become so obsessed with

perceived flaws that it can overtake their lives, says Phillips, a professor of psychiatry at Brown Medical School and Butler Hospital in Providence, R.I.

"I'm not saying it's pathological or problematic to pay attention to your appearance or pursue treatments for aging," says Phillips. But like patients with BDD, some women can become so myopic about their imperfections — a crease between their brows, a line around their mouth, a droop of the eyelid — that they lose sight of the forest for the trees, she says.

Perhaps that's how so many women end up looking bizarrely puffed, pulled or frozen-faced, yet are thrilled — because that pesky wrinkle is gone.

Plastic surgeons can be just as guilty of zeroing in on specific flaws at the expense of someone's overall appearance, says Dr. Sam Hamra, a Dallas plastic surgeon who specializes in revision facelifts.

"Even good plastic surgeons, I'm not talking quacks here, too often are taking normal-looking people and making them look abnormal," Hamra says.



Courtesy of Veda Combs

Veda Combs through the years. At far left, Combs is age 48 and her face has full, youthful appearance. In the middle photo, Combs is 51 and the recipient of a facelift that she says gave her a look of perpetual surprise by raising her eyebrows and propping open her eyes. Today, at age 70 (far right) after a revision facelift, Combs says she's thrilled to often get mistaken for a woman 20 years younger.

Hamra is probably the closest thing the plastic surgery community has to a whistle-blower. A decade ago, he published an article in the journal *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* blasting the unnatural looking results of most facelifts. "Everyone has seen it — it's that pulled-back look and those hollow-looking eyes. Go to a party in Aspen or Palm Springs and these ladies look like they're standing in a wind tunnel."

That's because the traditional facelift — still done in most cases — pulls back the cheeks and lower face, often giving the face the look of a stretched mask. Hamra developed and teaches a technique called the "composite facelift," in which he hikes up the forehead and cheeks while pulling back

the lower face to avoid the swept-back look. This takes a lot more time in the operating room and that eats into a surgeon's profits, which is why Hamra says it hasn't been widely adopted.

Veda Combs, a 70-year-old plastic surgery veteran from outside Dallas, says it took three facelifts to get it right. The first one, intended to get rid of "that turkey thing hanging from under my chin" left her looking "like he pulled back my face and tied it behind my ears." So she went to another surgeon to try to correct this and at the same time lift up her sagging brow. "This time my forehead was pulled so tight that it looked like my eyes were propped open like an owl. I looked like I was constantly being startled."

After reading about Hamra's approach, Combs came to see him in November 2006. Hamra undid the telltale swept-back look with his technique. "Now I look more natural; still, people nearly fall out of their chairs when they hear I'm 70," Combs says.

"You know, when you're all pulled back tight and don't have any wrinkles, it draws even more attention to your age," Combs says. "It's like those older women who try to dress all young and skimpy — it just makes you notice that they're old."

Youth and beauty

The problem, according to Bobbi Brown, the makeup artist and cosmetics tycoon, is we've confused the issues of youth and beauty.

"Some of the most beautiful women that I meet have lines on their face," says Brown, 51, whose book "Living Beauty" shows women how to look their best with makeup meant to enhance their best features.

In her view, women who try to blast away every line and wrinkle with surgery or shots end up failing on both counts. "They certainly don't end up looking beautiful and they don't end up really looking younger either," she says.

"I was looking at one of those women, a celebrity on TV, the other day and you don't look at her and think wow, she looks like a beautiful 24-year-old; you think, who is that 40-year-old weird-looking lady?"



Facing the Big 3-0

Hitting panic as she enters a new decade, Ying Chu considers the art of aging with just a little help.

By Ying Chu – April 21, 2008

For as long as I possibly could, I put off turning 30: I traveled overseas the week of my birthday, dodged my mother's calls on the actual day (er, bad reception?), and then, upon my return, delayed the festivities for a month. I am a natural-born procrastinator — in scheduling haircuts and holidays, even in getting married. And aging, in my mind, was simply no different.

You see, I was granted some pretty good genes and, hence, have always looked young for my age, so serious skincare — not the splash-your-face-with-water-and-fall-into-bed college variety, but the science-scrutinized alpha-, beta-, and omega-infused kind — just never resonated with me. Sure, I've dabbled in a new eye cream here, slathered on an exotic peptide serum there, but my basic regimen has been status quo for the past decade.

But now, since my 30th birthday — and since my discovery of a white eyelash (immediately plucked!), panic about the biological clock, and noticing the permanently etched "11" lines between my eyebrows — it's become apparent that I'm in the thick of it. We live in an era of strategic age management, where 50 looks like 40, and 40 is the new 30. But where does that leave the actual 30-year-olds? Chances are, the prick of a cosmetic needle or scalpel is still foreign to us, but can we afford to hold off for much longer? In another five years, could we still pass for a Gossip Girl's friend, not her mother? Will we still be asked for ID at bars?

In *Survival of the Prettiest*, author and Harvard psychologist Nancy Etcoff likens physical beauty to athletic skill — it peaks before age 35.

According to Manhattan dermatologist and founder of DDF Skincare, Dr. Howard Sobel, "Thirty is the tipping point of aging. You don't look much different than you did seven years ago, but the next three to five years are critical."

As if that's not depressing enough, MD Skincare's Dr. Dennis Gross puts it like this: "At 30, things are usually not as good as they appear. What lies beneath — cumulative sun damage, crumbling collagen and elastin [the support beams of still-plump skin], and disappearing blood vessels — is about to emerge as brown spots, wrinkles, and sallow and sagging skin if you don't take care of it."

The solutions Gross is talking about include the many topical and minimally invasive cosmetic treatments that have been embraced by his 20- and 50-something patients alike. From glycolic peels and nonablative lasers like VBeam and Mixto SX CO2 to injectables such as Restylane, Juvederm, and the ever-popular Botox (despite its recent FDA controversy), in-office choices tallied up to over 9.5 million procedures in 2007 in the U.S.

And it's no wonder women account for 92 percent of that aesthetic tweaking. For us, there's a physiological tug-of-war between youth and beauty. The same delicate skin that allows women to be more characteristically feminine and expressive is the reason that we crease earlier than men, explains Dr. Macrene Alexiades-Armenakas, assistant clinical professor at the Yale School of Medicine. "How that plays out for an individual depends on your genetics" — how dense and resilient your collagen is — "how you've protected your skin from sun and pollution, and your habits with facial expressions."

As I try not to furrow my brow, I recount my past sun sins: tanning in my teens; running, biking, and skiing in my 20s without reapplying SPF. Not horrible, but I decide that I need a more thorough analysis.

At my request, Sobel examines my 30-year-old mug — through his intimidating magnifying glasses, while I sit under a megawatt examination lamp the size of a golf umbrella — and concludes that while I am indeed a young 30, I have a laundry list of "compromised" issues typical of women my age. This includes telangiectasia (aka spider veins) cropping up around my nose; a sprinkling of brown sunspots across the tops of my apples; and deflating cheeks, which

are causing slight nasal labial folds to form around my mouth. (And I had always thought of my cheeks as *too* chubby.) He also offers up Botox right then and there for my developing crow's-feet, "11" lines, and peau d'orange chin. (Apparently, when I purse my bottom lip and crinkle my chin when feeling inquisitive, my skin resembles an orange peel, something I'd never considered...until now.) Total bill? About \$3750, with touch-ups every four months.

I consider this for about a nanosecond, then realize that not only would I be flat broke, but with my face newly peeled, frozen, and inflated, I'd no longer be able to express my despair. Have we really reached the moment where aging is a complete no-no, to be stalled, or even reversed, at all costs?

Probably sensing my panic, Sobel concedes that there are many less extreme and much less costly over-the-counter options to soften most of my issues — except the one affecting my chin, for which he still suggests Botox. After I politely pass on any needle-based intervention, he sends me away with antioxidants ("the more, the better to help prevent the collagen breakdown"), gentle peels, sunblock, and this insight: "I don't tell anyone they need lasers or injectables, but you have to decide if you're OK with aging."

At home, I try to re-create the stark conditions of Sobel's exam room with 100-watt bulbs and my boyfriend's shaving mirror. Yep, those "11's" are still prominent, and my eyes do crinkle when I smile, but would anyone — besides my dentist — encounter me like this? I think of my skincare-obsessed mother who, enhancement-free at 61, looks reassuringly youthful yet wise — a quality that only comes with age.

Botox Proving to be a Headache for Some

April 25, 2008. By Gordon Gibb

Irvine, CA: As critics of *Botox* continue to lobby for black box warnings regarding the potential for the toxin to migrate away from injection sites to affect muscular function that could allegedly prove injurious or even fatal to a patient, the drug best known for its cosmetic indication is currently being studied for the potential treatment of headache.

Allergan Inc., the maker of *Botox*, is currently in the midst of Phase III clinical studies testing the potential use of *Botox* for headaches. While it has not been determined just how the *Botox* would be administered for this indication if approved, it's ironic that a recent study coming out of Italy found that *Botox* injected into the whisker muscles of lab rats migrated into the brain.

Currently, *Botox* only carries approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for cosmetic injections between the eyebrows, as well as for certain other therapeutic uses dating back to 1989. In reality, however, *Botox* has been used at the discretion of physicians for other, non-approved indications, including cosmetic injections involving other parts of the face not approved by the FDA.

It will be interesting to see the outcome of the clinical studies on *Botox* for headache, if a Florida woman's experience with taking *Botox* for her migraines, is any indication. As reported by CBS in 2003, Karen Hicks was someone who was quite conversant with migraine headaches, which the St. Petersburg, Fla. grandmother had long battled, headaches that proved absolutely incapacitating when she was younger.

It was then, in 2003, that a local plastic surgeon suggested *Botox* as an experimental treatment for the relief of her migraines, and Hicks thought she had nothing to lose but the pain. A few days later, she told a CBS Television reporter, she could barely get out of bed. Turns out she was bedridden for six weeks, and was forced to call upon her ex-husband for support while she was ill, riddled with fatigue and pain.

According to the account, a query to Allergan regarding her symptoms delivered little satisfaction, as a company spokesperson claimed that her problems could not have been caused by the *Botox*.

The drug was being studied for potential treatment of migraines at the time, and it was reported that results looked promising. However, it was also reported at about the same time, five years ago in 2003, that a study by the American Academy of Dermatology revealed instances where patients who had received injections of *Botox* for wrinkles suffered severe, debilitating headaches as the result of receiving *Botox*.

"I literally sat down and wrote my will. I moved from bed to couch where I could watch my daughter," Hicks was quoted as saying in the CBS News report.

On April 2nd of this year it was revealed in the Journal of Neuroscience (JN) that an Italian study conducted by the National Research Council's Institute of Neuroscience of Pisa, Italy found that protein associated with botulinum toxin injected into the whisker muscles of rats had migrated to the area of the brain stem within three days of injection. Researchers also discovered that the toxin migrated to various other parts of the brain that controls long-term memory and spatial navigation, and from the superior colliculus—which is associated with eye-head coordination—back to the eye.

The study determined that brain cell activity was disrupted at the injection site, as well as distant-but-connected sites.

While Botox is not yet approved for migraine, and is still undergoing testing, Allergan confirmed in March that it had received a subpoena from the US Department of Justice, United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia requesting documents regarding promotional practices involving Botox.

Allergan stated in a release in March that it was their understanding that the inquiry involved questions surrounding alleged, off-label promotion related to the use of botulinum toxin type A for the treatment of headache. In the release, dated March 3rd 2008, the manufacturer states that it is Allergan policy to promote and market products only within the accepted boundaries, and in a manner consistent with FDA-approved product labeling.

It says it is co-operating completely with the US Department of Justice.

In 2001 it was reported that the FDA sent a communiqué to Allergan, citing the manufacturer for minimizing side effects for Botox in its promotional material.

At the time when Karen Hicks, of Florida, was battling the effects of both her migraine, and her Botox injection, an attorney for Allergan was quoted in a CBS news report as saying, "(Botox) has this wonderful, outstanding safety profile. And if there are side effects associated with it, they tend to be mild, tend to be temporary and tend to be local."

Those now lobbying for a black box warning for Botox will suggest that five years hence, that statement rings hollow. Botox has been implicated in hundreds of adverse reaction reports, and several deaths, resulting in some Botox parties being moved from the living room, to the courtroom.

Is plastic surgery going to become a career tool?

Craig Silverman, April 24, 2008 at 10:51 AM EDT

Lookism abounds in society, and the workplace is no exception. Many surveys have claimed to show that good looking people earn more money, get better jobs, are happier, and on it goes.

Would you try to make yourself better looking in order to help your career?

It's a provocative question that will undoubtedly disgust some people. Unless you're a model or work in some other beauty-driven profession, looks ideally shouldn't matter. It's about competency. Yet most of us can think of an example of someone with a handsome or pretty face getting an advantage.

Career blogger and author Penelope Trunk recently [wrote a post headlined "Plastic surgery is the next must-have career tool. Maybe."](#) She looks at a new book by professor Gordon Patzer, *Looks: Why They Matter More than You Ever Imagined*, and relates the topic to the office.

Trunk paraphrases some the lookist research from Patzer's book, which includes a European study that found "companies with better looking management consistently billed more hours at higher rates than companies with average looking management." This goes hand in hand with [research](#) that suggests tall, slim, good looking people earn more money.

So, getting back to the office, could you get ahead by improving your looks? Would you consider getting plastic surgery if you thought it could help your career? Here's some of what Trunk writes about the idea of using plastic surgery as a career aid:

We don't flinch when we hear that Cameron Diaz got a nose job or Brad Pitt had his ears pinned. It seems like a reasonable thing to do given their profession...

And just ten years ago, I remember talking with my friends about how gross Botox is. But my friend Sharon, who is a hairstylist in Los Angeles, says that the majority of her clients—who range from normal housewives to corporate lawyers—have had some sort of Botox injection. She says it's so mainstream in Los Angeles that it's almost a statement if you don't have it.

My editor tells me that I'm going to get killed with this post. So here is my first preemptive strike: This post stems from my genuine worry that I will be behind the curve. I worry that I will be philosophizing about plastic surgery while everyone else is getting it and not even thinking about it. Like Botox...

So my prediction is that soon we will all capitulate to the undeniable evidence that we have more opportunity in life if we are better looking, and it's relatively easy to buy good

looks. So we will. It will be something everyone does as they graduate from college, and not just the most rich and privileged kids. Plastic surgery will be for the go-getters and career-minded. Just you wait and see...

A scary thought, no? But it also doesn't strike me as unlikely. I'm sure plenty of people who aren't models or actors have had surgery at least in part to help them get ahead in life. We can't ignore the human obsession with looks. But who imagined botox could become a career aid?

So is plastic surgery going to become a career aid? Or are we already there? Share your thoughts in the comments.