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ETERNAL YOUTH and the YOUNG

The changing face of cosmetic surgery:

Who's going under the knife? You might be surprised.

By **BARBARA ORTUTAY**
COURIER TIMES

Back in the day, 50-year-olds got "work done" to look 24. At 24, furrow lines, crow's feet and saggy cheeks are the stuff of the future, like mortgage payments and saving up for your kids' college tuition.

But with less invasive and more efficient techniques, as well as relentless marketing campaigns, people undergoing "rejuvenation" procedures are not only looking, but getting younger.

Dr. Alan Brackup, a Langhorne cosmetic surgeon who specializes in facial procedures, said in addition to seeing more patients who cringe at the idea of going under the knife but have no problem with injection treatments, he is also getting more and more people in their early to mid-20s who want to delay aging before it even begins.

"Once you hit a certain age, there is only so much we can do," he said. Although Brackup has not yet had an 18-year-old patient, he said he wouldn't be opposed to treating a young person who, for example,

has deep furrow lines between her eyebrows. After all, he said, it'll only get worse with time.

"Our quest for beauty in this country is at an optimal level right now," said Diane, 42, one of Brackup's patients, who did not want her last name used. "I'm not against it, but it could probably get out of control. When I was in my 20s, I never thought about the aging process, but now I guess a lot of people are doing preventative work."

Botox injections, which use a form of botulism bacteria to paralyze muscles around frown lines and certain wrinkles, have increased by 454 percent among 19 to 34-year-olds between 2000 and 2003, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. Among 35 to 50-year-olds, the group that undergoes the most cosmetic procedures, the increase was 254 percent.

Members of the younger group also underwent more chemical peels and collagen injections. The older group, which still domi-

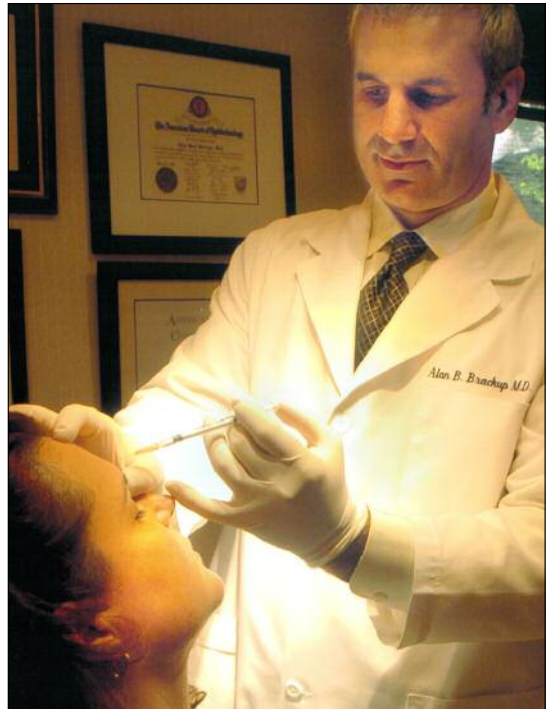
nates when it comes to these procedures, nevertheless saw a decrease in both.

An increasingly youth-oriented culture in the professional world is also getting more men to undergo cosmetic procedures, Brackup said. He estimates that about 20 percent of his patients are men, though this also includes hair replacement therapy.

"Men want to look young — or at least not old — to maintain competitiveness in the workplace," Brackup said. Getting rid of that "turkey gobbler" under the chin is a common procedure for male patients.

TV shows like "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" and the ubiquitous term "metrosexual" have made it more acceptable for straight men to pamper themselves silly with extensive skincare regimens and hair products.

Among men, who made up 12 percent of Botox patients in 2003, there was a 254 percent increase in the use of the treatment



Dr. Alan Brackup performs non-surgical cosmetic procedures, such as Botox injections, at his Langhorne office. **ART GENTILE / COURIER TIMES**

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Botox: Users getting younger

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between 2000 and 2003.

Though their name suggests minimal inconvenience to the patient, doctors caution that these non-surgical procedures should always be done by an experienced professional in a medical environment. Spas and salons may be able to perform simple treatments, but this does not make them safe, according to Brackup and other cosmetic surgeons.

"It needs to be looked at as a medical procedure, not a massage," Brackup said.

While Botox is the most popular non-surgical cosmetic procedure, injectable fillers are also becoming more accepted. These substances can be organic or synthetic and work to "fill" lines and wrinkles can't smooth out.

Restylane, a genetically engineered chemical, was approved by the FDA in December 2003 to fill wrinkles. It's an improvement from collagen, Brackup says, with a lower incidence of negative reactions. Unlike collagen, which is made from cowhide, Restylane, made from hyaluronic acid, is genetically engineered to work better with human skin.

Like other cosmetic surgeons, Brackup often combines the two procedures, which he said results in a more natural look than what people generally associate with cosmetic surgery. Gone is the lure of a "Barbie doll" face, instead people are going for more subtle changes to look like a younger and better-rested version of themselves.

"I don't have a frozen look," said Diane, who is a social worker from Trenton. "If I didn't tell people, you couldn't tell I had it done."

She likes Botox because it's painless and there is "no downtime," she said.

"I can get Botox and go back to work," she added, likening the procedure to ironing your face.

She even likes the sound of the injection.

"It sounds like ... if you were to put a match head out."

Diane has been going to Brackup for several years, and says it's trust that keeps her from going anywhere else. The first procedure she got done, laser skin resurfacing, was to erase the years of sun and cigarette damage to her fair skin.

"That was minimal — no cutting, no stitching," she said.

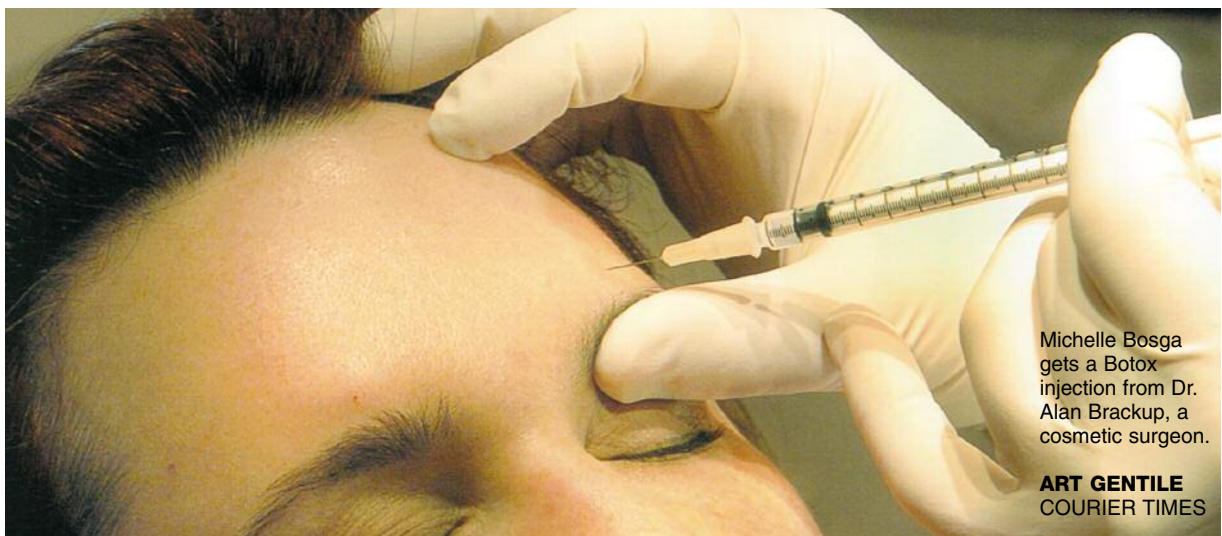
Skin resurfacing uses a carbon dioxide laser to remove damaged layers. While it doesn't involve surgery, general anesthesia is often used, and plastic surgeons recommend two weeks of recovery time.

Now that the canvas was clean, Diane noticed a few deeper wrinkles on her new and improved skin. Though Botox was relatively new at the time (doctors have been using it since 1989, but the FDA only approved its cosmetic use in April 2002), Diane trusted Brackup, who had the procedure done himself. Now, she returns every five or six months for Botox treatment.

"It makes me feel better, a little more confident," she said, though adding that she wouldn't recommend people going through depressive times to use cosmetic surgery to feel better.

"I would refer them to get a little more inside work first," she said.

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Michelle Bosga gets a Botox injection from Dr. Alan Brackup, a cosmetic surgeon.

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