

Old medicine gets new look for aging

Acupuncture without needles gives face a lift

Kate Nolan The Arizona Republic Mar. 27, 2006 12:00 AM

SCOTTSDALE - Laurie Koch was stealing peeks in the mirror. Her face looked good.

"Around the eyes, the crow's feet, they're diminished," she said with undisguised joy. Three hours earlier, Koch, 51, completed her first energy light rejuvenation treatment. On her last birthday, Jan. 28, the Desert Ridge resident noticed a few lines on her still-supple face.

Last week, she started doing something about it. "It's not like I want to go back to looking 21. I want to look mature, but finished. Youthful, not young. Childlike, not childish," said Koch, describing a conundrum known to legions of the middle-aged.

Koch deemed plastic surgery too invasive and expensive, and the partial paralysis produced by Botox was unappealing.

Instead she made an appointment at Juvé, a new Scottsdale anti-aging salon that is the first in the Valley to offer energy light rejuvenation as an alternative to surgery, chemical peels and dermabrasion.

It's based on acupuncture, "the oldest medical technology in the world," said Rachelle Marmor, a Tempe acupuncturist who is a partner in Juvé.

The 2,500-year old Chinese practice addresses medical problems with needles inserted into specific points along the body's electrically based nervous system.

"But it doesn't use needles. It uses one-millionth of an amp of electricity and affects the body the same way needles do. It's turbo acupuncture," said Marmor, who has long used the low-current technology to treat pain and for patients who are squeamish about needles, such as children.

Marmor said the technique appeals to a new breed of health care consumer.

"I'm 46, and people in my age group are staying active. We're health conscious and we don't want to cut unnecessarily or to inject toxins to eliminate lines," Marmor said.

Face lifts can cost four times the initial ELR protocol.

The FDA-approved procedure is essentially risk free but is off-limits to people who have epilepsy, oral herpes or are in the first trimester of pregnancy.

Recharging the skin

The ELR technique is new in that it combines the minute electrical current with light beams that simultaneously treat the skin.

The agent of change is the Acutron Mentor, a Star Trek-looking device with a small screen, two wands and numerous knobs, developed by Phoenix acupuncturist Darren Starwynn.

The idea is that the micro-current, said to match the strength of the body's own electrical charge,

stimulates production of collagen and elastin, the stuff that keeps skin pretty and diminishes with age.

The light therapy stirs specific reactions in the cells. Blue-light therapy, for example, has been shown to produce a substance deadly to bacteria that cause acne, according to the National Institutes of Health. Other types of light allow cells to absorb water or aid in the production of collagen and elastin.

Acupuncture has been acknowledged even by Western medicine as a valid treatment for pain, nausea, addiction, stroke rehabilitation, carpal tunnel syndrome, asthma and many other health problems.

The treatment points are located along a system of "meridians" that acupuncturists visualize as a sort of fiber-optic network. Starwynn's Acutron does the same thing as the needles. It is just newer technology, acupuncturists say.

Its face-lifting benefits were first noticed by a Florida acupuncturist who used it to treat a patient with Bell's palsy, a condition characterized by facial paralysis. After several treatments, the patient's face became youthful.

Starwynn researched the effect, and developed a protocol for Acutron face lifts, adding the light treatment to extend the duration of the face lift, which varies among individuals. Results like Koch's are immediately visible. A series of 12 to 18 treatments may be required for lasting results, Marmor said.

Two one-hour treatments per week are recommended for the first four weeks, followed by weekly appointments. A single appointment is \$230, but cost-cutting packages are available. Maintaining the look requires a follow-up every two or three months, also available in discount packages.

Facing new technology

Koch said she was excited before the one-hour treatment began with a facial cleansing to remove makeup. When the two wands appeared, Koch relaxed, saying their gelled tips felt like two cool spoons on her face.

Aesthetician Heather Boulter, who was specially trained in energy/light therapy, initially used the wands to increase circulation and then made adjustments to vary the current and light, depending on the parts of the face being addressed. First blue, then green and turquoise caressed Koch's cheeks, forehead, neck and laugh lines.

The wands were in contact with the face for most of the hour - except for the five minutes Boulter spent massaging Koch's feet.

As the treatment drew to a close, the patient's face had picked up color and the skin around her eyes looked firmer.

For information on Energy Light Rejuvenation contact: Vahila Acupuncture and Massotherapy • 4643 18th ST. NW • Canton, OH 44708 • 330-477-0777

(Note: Treatments at Vahila Acupuncture & Massotherapy in Canton are \$90 Yes, it's the same thing.)