DS Frontier

Dr Catherine Stone reports back on the top five global cosmetic medicine trends from London’s FACE Conference 2015

1. Long term use of dermal fillers and Botox help to ‘press pause’ on ageing

For years the public has asked what the long-term effects might be for Botox and HA fillers and research is now showing that they may actually help prevent facial ageing in the long-term, as well as giving positive cosmetic benefits in the short-term (if used judiciously).

Renowned plastic surgeon, Mr Rajiv Grover, presented his final research on 51 consecutive facelift patients, where he showed that repeated treatments with HA dermal fillers resulted in firmer skin with more collagen that replicated the retaining ligaments that support our face, allowing those women to ‘press pause’ on ageing.

Mr Grover collected connective tissue from the same portion of redundant skin from the facelifts of ‘loose’ English women, where the skin has less collagen and support, is lacking firmness, and as such tends to sag as we age, compared them with ‘tight’ Asian skin, which has much firmer connective tissue and is less likely to sag or drop, which is why those of Asian-descent often look much more youthful, and compared both to ‘loose’ English women repeatedly treated with HA fillers. Under the microscope, the tissue that had HA filler treatment looked almost identical to the tissue from the Asian women. Photos showed that the HA-treated group looked more youthful, with less sagging of the face.

If you have poor retaining ligaments or supportive collagen in the soft tissue under the skin, the face sags, similar to the Roly dogs who have big wrinkles as puppies, when their skin is too big and their connective tissues are weak. This loose skin moves easily over the soft supportive layer of the skin compared to tighter, firmer skin with strong supportive tissue - what Dr Grover affectionately describes as ‘facial velcro’, which keeps the skin of the face sticking to itself.

Repeated treatments with HA fillers in the cheeks, chin and jawline can replicate the action of the retaining ligaments that support the face, giving the ‘velcro’ effect and preventing the development of ‘jowls’ from the face sagging forward, potentially reducing the need or desire for facial surgery in the long-term.

The positive long-term effects of dermal fillers also coincide with research released this year on the positive long-term effects of Botox in preventing ageing changes in the face.

Over the last 15 years, the focus for dermal filler treatments has shifted from the 2D view of just filling wrinkles to the 3D view of replacing the volume that we lose from the face as we age. By adding the 4th dimension of time, we can now develop an ‘anti-gravity plan’ of regular treatments which help to fight the effects of gravity in causing ageing, and essentially press a ‘facial pause button’ to prevent or reduce long-term facial ageing.

2. Vaginal rejuvenation

Vaginal rejuvenation was the ‘hot topic’ at the Northern Hemisphere conferences this year, with the major conferences dedicating almost half a day to it. Vaginal rejuvenation (officially Vulvar Vaginal Rejuvenation) is the fastest growing segment of the market. While only a year ago no one had really heard of it, in the last year, a plethora of treatments for tightening, reshaping, enhancing and rejuvenating our most intimate areas have become available.

At FACE 2015, the major topics for VVR were the ‘labial puff’...
using dermal filler to plump up the labia majora to make the vulva look more youthful and help to obscure the labia minora, discussion about the O-Shot - using PRP to improve sexual function, orgasm and urinary stress incontinence; and vaginal tightening/labia reduction with laser and radiofrequency.

3. 'Party feet': Killer heels easier to wear with dermal fillers in the feet

Many women love wearing killer heels but they are killer in nature as well as name! When the weight of the whole body is transmitted through the metatarsal joints of the ball of the foot, the supporting fat pad moves up the foot, the bones lose their protection, and we can develop metatarsalgia or foot pain.

Instead of resorting to flat shoes (which can sometimes trigger another foot condition called plantar fasciitis), or constantly having to take your shoes off and carry them, a relatively safe and simple treatment using dermal fillers into the fat pad of the foot - in the same way they are used to plump and support the fat pads in the face - can help provide constant cushioning and reduce foot pain.

The foot is quite a sensitive area, so numbing cream is used before a soft dermal filler is placed into the fat pads which have been marked out as tender when wearing heels. The treatment takes about 30 minutes and comfortable sports shoes are recommended for the first 24-48 hours after treatment, with a gradual reintroduction to your 'killer' heels.

Slow and steady is recommended for this treatment - you can always go back and repeat the treatment 1-2 months later. Other causes of foot pain, such as arthritis, need to be excluded by your injecting doctor before they will provide this treatment.

4. Cryotherapy

Cold therapy, or cryotherapy, has been used for many years in sports recovery and is now being used to increase blood flow to the facial tissues in a pleasant and easy treatment which gives an immediate youthful glow. Cooling the tissues stimulates the blood vessels to contract, and then compensate once the cold stimulus is taken away, resulting in increased blood flow to the treated area. People were receiving the treatment at FACE, and reported that not only did your skin glow afterwards, it gave a feeling of euphoria, and was a fantastic hangover cure!

5. Male facial contouring

The male cosmetic market is growing, but men have different needs and a different aesthetic to women. Men tend to seek treatment to improve or maintain their social status rather than to 'look beautiful', so will often ask for treatments that make them look 'stronger', less tired and stressed and more masculine.

Where a high, flat forehead and open brows are considered attractive in a woman, men look better with a shorter forehead with a few horizontal lines, a strong brow and close-knit eyebrows. The ideal point of the cheek is lower and closer to the nose than in a woman, while the lower face is the most important indicator of masculinity, with research showing that a strong chin and jawline elicit trust and a perceived increase in leadership qualities and social status. From around the age of 25-30, the bones of the face start to shrink, resulting in the chin, jaw and cheeks becoming smaller and weaker and contributing to the ageing process.

Treating the tear trough, mid-face and temples with dermal filler may help a man look less tired, while broadening the cheeks, chin and jawline to strengthen the face are all possible with dermal fillers. The lips can be enhanced, but must be much more subtle than with women - building slight volume and balance through the lips is desirable, but a strong lip border or big puffy lips are not.

Botox must be used more judiciously in men, especially in the forehead, as it's important not to flatten and widen the forehead or to arch the brows - these can all feminise the face. Inexperienced injectors may try to treat men with the same techniques as women, which explains why some prominent men end up looking weird (like Shane Warne!) rather than better. An experienced injector can look at the sexual dimorphisms of the face and determine what treatment will be best to help improve the person's appearance, while tailoring a plan that will retain the natural character of their face, and the things that make them special and unique.