

Acupuncture "face-lifts": A new face for ancient practice

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Dr. Shali Rassouli performs a cosmetic acupuncture treatment on patient Ruth Dorree in Toronto, July 17, 2008. Facial acupuncture treatment, dubbed "nonsurgical face-lift" has grown in popularity over ...

Tired of Botox? Can't stand the thought of another chemical peel? Perhaps, acupuncture is the answer.

Facial acupuncture treatment, dubbed "nonsurgical face-lift" has grown in popularity over the past few years.

"Ten years ago, the alternative was Botox, fillers and all that stuff. Now, 10 years after, people are looking for alternatives

to Botox and fillers. This is the only treatment that would be as effective," said Shali Rassouli, a licensed practitioner of Chinese medicine and a specialist in cosmetic acupuncture.

Rassouli, the first acupuncturist to practice the technique in Canada, charges C\$125 per one-hour session for the treatment, which usually requires 10 to 12 visits.

Rassouli has trained more than 500 others practitioners from Canada, the United States, and Australia since 2000.

Acupuncture, which has been used for more than 2,000 years, involves stimulating certain points on the body, known as "qi" with needles, heat, pressure.

According to Rassouli, who may insert between 25 and 75 needles on the face increase the circulation and stimulate collagen production, which fills in wrinkles, tightens sagging skin and eyelids and brightens a dull complexion.

Rassouli also uses acupuncture to treat cellulite.

"Why choose this over Botox? It's a worry-free treatment. There are no side effects. And you're doing something beneficial internally too," she said, noting that pressure points on the face effect other parts of the body such as the kidney and spleen.

A 1996 report in the journal of Clinical Acupuncture reported a 90 percent effective rate among 300 people treated with cosmetic acupuncture. But the Western medical journals have not yet reviewed the research and many Western doctors remain skeptical.

Michael McGuire, a plastic surgeon based in Santa Monica, California and vice president of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons said cosmetic acupuncture may show results on a short-term basis.

"I would say that there conceptually could be benefits from acupuncture in causing people to relax, or if they have pain, it might be effective in reducing painful stimuli, both of which would approve their appearance, simply by causing them to relax," he said.

"Relaxing obviously decreases frowning. It decreases scowling. It decreases squinting. And those are all line-producing activities that people do better without."

But McGuire said he disagreed with claims that acupuncture actually increases the body's collagen production, which can make skin fuller, more elastic and younger looking.

"People think of making more collagen sounds like a good thing that's going to prevent aging, but that's not really the

case," he said. "It's not the normal collagen that's being created. It's scar collagen."

More than 8 million Americans use acupuncture for different ailments, according to a study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and millions more in Canada rely on a variety of alternative health treatments to supplement their health care.