

Renewal in Cosmetic Dermatology

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It is an exciting time for dermatologists. In the 16 years that I have been in practice our knowledge of disease pathogenesis has increased and has shaped treatments that can now offer life-changing improvement for patients with extensive dermatologic disease. The everyday practice of cosmetic dermatology also has advanced. Sixteen years ago the only cosmetic options we had for our patients were bovine or human collagen injections, traditional CO₂ laser resurfacing, and the older generations of pulsed dye lasers. Neuromodulators were just being introduced. We quickly learned the limitations and complications associated with these modalities. Collagen injections were directed at fine perioral lines and lasted 3 to 4 months. The worst complication would be a bruise or an allergic reaction to the bovine collagen. If we really needed to restore volume beyond the perioral regions, our only option was autologous fat transfer. CO₂ laser resurfacing was used to firm skin, erase deep wrinkles, and improve sun damage, but its use was limited to older, fair-skinned individuals due to the inherent risk for hypopigmentation and depigmentation. Pulsed dye lasers similarly had no means of cooling the skin, thus they were limited to lighter-skinned individuals and had notable risk for blisters, burns, and hypopigmentation. Since then, our understanding of skin healing, laser-tissue interaction, and facial aging has driven the field to new heights of technological advances and safety. Just as I tell my patients and residents, there is no better time to be in this field than at this moment. Dermatologists have driven the advances behind many of the technologies that are now in widespread use among physicians in a variety of specialties.

Our understanding of facial aging has evolved to include the complex interplay of skeletal change, fat atrophy, and skin aging, which must all be considered when improving a patient's appearance. Fillers have evolved in physical characteristics to give us the ability to choose between lift, spread, neocollagenesis, or water

absorption. Thus, we can select the proper filler for the specific anatomic area we are rejuvenating.

Our understanding of photoaging and laser-tissue physics has allowed for the development of a newer generation of lasers ranging from fractionated lasers to noninvasive modalities that can safely be used in a variety of ethnic skin types to address acne scars, wrinkles, and inflammatory processes such as acne and rosacea. Similarly, the desire to tighten redundant skin has continued to drive ultrasound and radiofrequency technology and sparked growth in a newer field of cryolipolysis and chemical lipolysis agents.

Our dialogue with patients also has evolved to include the 4 R's of antiaging: resurfacing the skin (eg, lasers, peels), refilling the lost volume (eg, fillers, fat), redraping the excess skin (eg, radiofrequency, ultrasound, laser, surgery), and relaxing dynamic lines (eg, neuromodulators). I propose an additional R: renewal! We must focus on the need for constant renewal so that patients maintain the results we have achieved. I apply the analogy of exercising to get into shape. One must go to the gym regularly to get to the desired level of fitness, but you do not stop exercising, otherwise you will quickly relapse to your former lack of fitness. Similarly, patients should receive the appropriate treatments to bring them to the desired level of rejuvenation, but then some form of constant renewal process is needed to maintain them at that level. Without the stimulation of the skin, the aging process continues and the cycle begins all over again.

In my practice, renewal is achieved by driving the skin to maintain the glow and smoothness that enhances the results of the fillers, neuromodulators, lasers, and peels that we have used. The skin is the first thing people notice. Without the glow, the patient will look good but not great. I tell patients that this part of the process is their responsibility. They must adhere to the skin care regimen specifically designed to address their needs. By incorporating the patient in the rejuvenation process, he/she is empowered to take control over the aging process and has grown more confident in you as a physician.

These are exciting times and there is still so much in the pipeline. By continually learning, reading, and attending workshops and meetings, you can make sure our specialty continue to be the leader in the antiaging field.

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