Cosmetex, Gold Coast, Australia: taking a minimalist, natural approach to injecting

Every year, the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery hosts an annual conference to provide a forum for surgeons, dermatologists, doctors and nurses to update their knowledge and exchange ideas. This year, aesthetic nurse specialist Leslie Fletcher travelled all the way to the Gold Coast in Australia to speak on neocollagenesis, and learn about rejuvenation strategies and techniques from several international experts.

Hundreds of surgeons, dermatologists, physicians and cosmetic nurses gathered in Australia from 1–3 May for Cosmetex 2014. Every year, the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery (ACCS) hosts Cosmetex to provide a forum for collaboration, education and exchange between Australian and international cosmetic medical practitioners, and to foster its mission statement of ‘raising standards, protecting patients’.

Opening address
During the opening address at Cosmetex, New South Wales compliance commissioner Tony Kofkin spoke about various cases of complications and prosecution in Australia. The case studies he presented were both fascinating and educational, with a recurring theme of incidents of importing illegal injectables.

The ‘subliminal difference’
American plastic surgeon Steven Dayan spoke of the minute nuances of overall beauty that aesthetic practitioners need to be aware of—a process he refers to in his New York Times bestseller book, Subliminally Exposed, as the ‘subliminal difference’.

Evolution of lasers
American dermatologist Christopher Zachary put a spark in the agenda by performing a 15-minute poem about the evolution of lasers and their role in medical aesthetics.

Injectables
After the opening address, the conference divided into tracks such as injectables, practice management and laser sciences. During the injectables track, the current trends of non-surgical changes in the industry were introduced. Opening the session was an Asian dermatologist remarking on the importance of the desired ‘V’ shape for Asian beauty. The talk took a turn to what seemed to be one of the prevailing themes of the whole conference: the discussion surrounding neocollagenesis.

Neocollagenesis
The injectables track kicked off with a presentation by myself and Australian cosmetic doctor Sarah Boxley, where we presented evidence to support that it is possible to increase the level of neocollagenesis based on the amount of ‘controlled injury’ created during strategic injection. Mark Nestor continued this topic with additional evidence that the injection of hyaluronic acid can also induce neocollagenesis.

Sponsored sessions
Galderma sponsored several hands-on demonstrations with Mark Nestor, combining dermal fillers and toxins. A breakout session sponsored by iNova aesthetics, the distributors of Sculptra, also proved to be very useful. During the session, they injected a ‘double-diluted’ version of Sculptra to the model’s décolletage in an effort to stimulate collagen in the area.

Periorbital rejuvenation
There were a several lectures on periorbital rejuvenation and non-surgical rhinoplasty, which gave these areas the undivided attention they deserve. Speakers used dermal fillers as well as neuromodulators to address both of these areas. Rajeev Acquilla from the UK also gave an expert presentation on the six-point technique for his periorbital injection protocol, naming which area should be injected in which order. He also rolled out a similar themed eight-point technique using botulinum toxin and hyaluronic acid dermal fillers for rhinomodulation.

Injection technique
Watching the keynote speakers practise what they preached was an effective learning reinforcement tool, as delegates were able to see them interacting with patients and experience their individual style of injecting. Particularly interesting and entertaining was the presentation by Canadian plastic surgeon Arthur Swift, who has a real knack for engaging the audience with his impromptu pop quizzes. He showed delegates a very impressive bolus technique for temples that, due to strategic placement, made it most effective for elevating the brow simultaneously. He also demonstrated a technique for rounding out the forehead, giving a more beautiful frontal angle to the face. He assessed the angle of the face by using his own pair of measurement calipers.

However, Swift’s main point made was his extreme desire to use an ‘economy of product’. In light of this, he ‘blended’ down the hyaluronic acid products used significantly and injected miniscule amounts of various products to accomplish his patient’s panfacial goals.

Managing complications
The final morning injectables session was spent on addressing complications. Of course, this was every injector’s ‘love to hate’ session; as important as it is to see, it...
makes everyone want to go home and quit their jobs. The main speakers for this part of the conference were Steve Dayan, Rajeev Acquilla and Israeli dermatologist Marina Landau, who covered everything from vascular occlusion and biofilms with dermal fillers, to neuromodulator misplacement and corrections. The photos presented were compelling and a firm chastisement that this industry encompasses more than just ‘aesthetics and beauty’ and must also include medical and physiological.

With the increase in the presentation of biofilms in the medical aesthetic industry, the stern warning to employ as aseptic a technique as possible when injecting was evident. Two additional warnings were also discussed: to delay prescribing cortisone, as it could actually make the biofilm unresponsive to antibiotic therapy; and to start antibiotics within 24 hours if an infection is suspected.

Memorable quotes
Steven Dayan left delegates with food for thought and created some memorable quotes. For example, he said: ‘The more I study outside of medicine, the better doctor I become.’ He also told practitioners that their ‘number one goal should be to get people to look at the eyes’ and that ‘permanent products lead to permanent complications’.

Arthur Swift also provided some professional advice on product dilution, stating that aesthetic practitioners should ‘blend the products, don’t dilute them. Your patients don’t want diluted anything’. When discussing the signs and symptoms of impending necrosis, he also said in jest: ‘It’s the purple on their face that precedes the brown in your shorts.’