

the new **You!**

Facelift in a Bottle

Winnipeg dermatologist enthused
about new treatment for the wear and tear of life

By Peter Carlyle-Gordge
For the Free Press

Dr. Earl Minuk has seen some great advances in non-surgical cosmetic rejuvenation in the 15 years he's worked in Winnipeg as a cosmetic dermatologist.

Laser treatments, facial fillers and botox injections have all helped build a thriving practice and restore a more youthful feeling to those beginning to show signs of the wear and tear of life.

While such treatments are an important part of his work, he's also excited about something quite new. Sculptra has recently been approved in Canada for filling in wrinkles, furrows and sunken facial features and Dr. Minuk expects it will rapidly become a major tool in his restorative work.

The Winnipeg doctor is one of only 20 in Canada licensed to use it in trials. The product is injected into soft tissue under the skin of a sunken area,

where facial fat has disappeared due to ageing or other causes.

In fact, Sculptra was first tested and approved in the U.S. specifically as an approved filler to correct facial fat loss (lipoatrophy) experienced by people with HIV. It was the first safety approved product for the condition and got expedited approval from the Federal Drug Administration because of its helpfulness to HIV patients. It's estimated that in the U.S. alone up to 350,000 people living with the disease could benefit from it. In the U.S. about 150,000 people have already had the treatment.

In Canada, however, it is likely to find more favour with an ageing population. Sculptra is sometimes called the "facelift in a bottle" and is made of poly-L-lactic acid, which is safe in the body and also biodegradable. It's been used for years in dissolvable stitches and soft tissue implants.

Dr. Minuk says Sculptra has few side effects and volumizes body areas where fat volume has been



Photos courtesy of Dr. Danny Vleggeer

lost. It increases the thickness of the skin and helps collagen to grow, thus filling out areas that once looked sunken.

"It's mixed with water before being injected and there may be some swelling for a day or two but downtime is absolutely minimal," he says. "I'm very excited about it and think it will become quite a big thing in Canada.

"Most people will need about three sessions and you don't get immediate results, but over time it does volumize the skin and create a fuller face."

Dr. Minuk says another advantage is that unlike some other fillers this product does not need constant reapplication.

"You may need a further session after two to three years, but it is stable and long lasting."

The three treatments should be spaced about a month or so apart but by the time of the last injection – which take 15 to 30 minutes – a definite improvement should be noticed as the skin thickens and hollows begin to fill in.

The product doesn't come cheap, however. Those with mild facial fat loss will likely

pay around \$2,000 for treatments, while those with more severe wasting are looking at about \$4,000.

The treatment can be used on the face, including the forehead and around the eyes and lips. It can also be used between the mouth and nose and can add volume to cheeks, to folds around the chin and to

rings around the eyes. As well, it can be effective on the neck and lower neckline and on the hands, knees and ankles.

Patients can be up and about immediately after a treatment and any swelling is usually gone after one or two days. In most

cases, makeup can be applied a few hours after a treatment.

Cosmetic surgery (especially the non-invasive, non-surgical kind) is a huge growth industry in North America as baby boomers age and try to retain their looks.

Dr. Minuk says removing or minimizing sunken facial features can provide a great psychological boost. To put it another way, lifting your facial depressions can also elevate mood and lift psychological depression.

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