

Questions Over Long-Term Effects of Botox

by Helen Tunnah

The long-term effects of glamour drug Botox on the brain and nervous system are not known, the British Medical Journal has warned.

"Just because it's fashionable, people shouldn't lose sight of the fact that it's a medical treatment, not a lipstick," wrote Dr. Peter Misra, a leading London neurophysiologist, in the journal. Despite its widespread use, Botox, a derivative of the potentially deadly botulinum toxin, should be treated with care, he added.

The use of Botox as a treatment for wrinkles has skyrocketed in recent years, especially among the rich and famous who think it makes them look young. Celebrities who have used it include the Peter Pan of Pop, Cliff Richard, and Lulu. Cher, Madonna and Sylvester Stallone were also rumoured to have flirted with Botox as an alternative to the plastic surgeon's knife.

Some people might be using Botox when what they really need is psychiatric help to overcome phobias about their appearance, the doctor warned. Moreover, the long-term effects of the treatment on one's health are still not known, he stressed.

On the other hand, Dr. John Barrett of the Palm Clinic in Auckland has admitted to using Botox for many years. He was confident this was safe, he added.

Dr. Barrett, who is also the Australasian president of the Appearance Medicine Society, could not tell exactly how many people have undergone Botox treatment in his country, but estimates the number had increased tenfold over the past five years. "Over the years that I've been using it on patients there has been an exponential increase because it is an extremely safe, very effective treatment," he said. "I haven't noted any deleterious effects which would lead me to have any concerns about the product... and over seven years of use and thousands of injections."

As much as 95 percent of users were women aged between 30 and 45. Most have the treatment about three times a year.

The British Medical Journal also reports incidences of people with cardiovascular problems or illnesses such as pneumonia dying from Botox use in other countries.

Botox has been approved for use in New-Zealand, but only for cosmetic purposes—for example, for the lines around the eyes and forehead, said senior medical officer Dr. Stewart Jessamine. Also, Botox has to be administered by a medical practitioner.

Source: *The New Zealand Herald*, 29 November 2002, <<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?storyID=3005905&thesection=news&thesubsection=general>>

Asian Americans Targeted for Tobacco Promotion

by Bob Burton

For the last 15 years, the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in the United States have been the target of the tobacco industry to boost flagging sales and win allies to help defeat anti-smoking initiatives, tobacco control researchers say.

A team of four U.S. and Canadian researchers trawled through 500,000 pages of internal tobacco industry documents—made publicly available as a result of U.S. court cases—to investigate tobacco promotion strategies aimed at Asian American and Pacific Islanders, or the AAPI market in industry jargon.

Their findings in the September 2002 edition of *Tobacco Control*, published by the British Medical Journal, add to revelations that the tobacco industry developed detailed strategies for other specific groups including African Americans and the homosexual community.

Likewise, the strategies developed to target Asian Americans in the United States may well be used now in Asia, says Simon Chapman, editor of *Tobacco Control* and professor of public health and community medicine at the University of Sydney.

"In the tobacco industry, strategies that successfully boost sales in one country are quickly globalised. What works targeting Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States today may well be used in Asia and the Pacific tomorrow," he said.

"The global tobacco companies' strategy is to compensate for declining sales in some countries such as the United States by boosting sales in regions such as Asia and the Pacific—where the protection of public health from tobacco is less advanced," Chapman said.

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