



Brisbane's Botox boom

NEEDLING WORRIES

WORDS: NICOLE CARRINGTON

BRISBANE is in the midst of a Botox revolution, with everyone from bank tellers to business magnates turning to the toxin to restore their youth.

An estimated \$300 million was spent on "non-invasive and minimally invasive cosmetic procedures" in Australia in 2007, says the Cosmetic Physicians Society of Australasia (CPSA).

Botox, dermal fillers to plump up the lips and laser treatments for scarring or hair removal are the most common cosmetic procedures and the CPSA expects a 10 per cent growth in the industry in 2008.

CPSA president Dr Mary Dingley said wrinkles, skin cancers or sun spots caused by sun damage were the major reasons people sought cosmetic treatments.

And in 2007, the CPSA reported an estimated 20 per cent increase in the numbers of men seeking cosmetic treatments.

In the US, there were 11.7 million surgical and non-surgical cosmetic procedures performed in 2007 and since 1997, there has been a 754 per cent increase in non-surgical procedures, says the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. Over there, Botox is among the top five non-surgical cosmetic treatments.

Leading cosmetic physician Dr Albert Ho, who owns cosmetic enhancement clinics all over Australia, spoke to *City News* about

the Botox boom.

With 16 years' industry experience, Dr Ho has been injecting Botox for eight. He sees up to 20 clients a day from all walks of life, ranging in age from 22-60.

He and renowned injector RN Jane Hunter operate Bulimba's Renaissance Cosmetic Group and also offer their services at Blow, Newstead.

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— LINDSAY BENNETT

“Botox really took off in Brisbane in 1995. In the last three or four years the market has increased by about 50 per cent in Australia,” Dr Ho said. “About 90 per cent of women who have it done will have it done again.”

“A lot of clients come to see me, not just because they want the wrinkles gone, but because Botox can stop them from getting headaches.”

Ms Hunter, who has been injecting Botox for 13 years, said the non-surgical procedure could dramatically slow down the aging process.



And the nurse has so many clients in Brisbane, it is impossible to avoid running into them.

"Once at Ecco Bistro, I walked in and spied a table of ladies and three of them were my clients and they were obviously terrified I'd say something because they obviously hadn't told each other they'd had it done!

"But client confidentiality is crucial."

High-profile Brisbane Botox fans include Mercedes-Benz Fashion Festival Brisbane director Lindsay Bennett and Nova announcer, Emily Everywhere blogger and Kerri-Anne Kennerley regular Emily-Jade O'Keeffe.

Lindsay, 43, who has had Botox up to seven times in his frown lines and crows feet, swears by its anti-wrinkle benefits and the "competitive edge" this gives him. He has never had any negative side effects.

"It's not a good look for people with a high profile to look tired and drawn like a doornail," he quipped. "It's important to look fresh. Botox is like a fashion accessory.

"And I've noticed many more men getting it done. It takes years off you but you need to get it done regularly."

Emily-Jade O'Keeffe, 31, gets Botox once a year in her frown lines and crows feet but would get it more regularly if she could afford it.

"The first time I got it done I was worried I'd look frozen but I learnt that if you have a good injector, they will give you the right amount for your age and face," she said. "I did a lot of research beforehand and found out that no amount of expensive beauty crèmes will ever stop wrinkles.

"You need to use the crèmes for hydration but Botox is the only thing that stops the onset of aging.

"I like the slight eyebrow lift that Botox gives me and believe prevention is better than the cure."

Australian Medical Association of Queensland president Dr Ross Cartmill said Botox was not "without risks" and advised people to do their research beforehand and to get their GP to refer them to a trusted cosmetic physician.

"It (Botox) ought to be done by doctors only," Dr Cartmill said. "There is no doubt cosmetic treatments are an interesting phenomenon in Australia today – we are certainly going down the same road as the US, in terms of its prevalence.



PERFECT PAIR: Cosmetic physician Dr Albert Ho and registered nurse Jane Hunter. **INSET:** Lindsay Bennett and Emily Jade O'Keeffe.





Nicole Carrington's Botox diary

I'VE written many City News stories on the Botox revolution since it first hit Brisbane about 2003. I remember almost vomiting when I first witnessed a doctor injecting Botox into a client's face for a story. It just seemed so drastic and brutal.

But many friends and business contacts had enjoyed happy Botox experiences, and I'd grown curious about what it would be like having the toxin injected into my head.

What followed was an emotional and at times stressful Botox experience, but ultimately a very pleasing one.

Day 1, 8.30am: On the drive to meet Dr Ho and RN Jane Hunter at the Renaissance Cosmetic Group, Bulimba, I am nervous and nauseous about getting Botox. My palms are drenched with sweat, making driving difficult. I'm committed to my decision to go through with it, and try to focus on what a top story it will be – no matter whether the results are good or bad. After all, I've skydived – how much scarier can Botox be? When I arrive, I turn journalist and fire question after question at them about possible side effects. Headaches, redness, bruising and pain at the injection site are common – droopy eyebrow/eyelids are the worst outcome. When I lift up my fringe to

show the injectors my frown lines, Dr Ho recoils. "Ah yes," he says. "You can certainly do with it (Botox)." Ouch.

Ms Hunter and I have a 30-minute consultation about the procedure, where I am shown the needles and the product. Agreeing with Dr Ho's assessment, she says I have "heavy frown lines" in my forehead. Crikey! My palms are sweeter than ever and I feel light-headed. I pose for my hideous frowning shot, as pictured above. The *City News* photographer looks queasy too and there is no need to ask her to stay for an "after shot" – the procedure takes about seven days to see the full effect.



Finally, Ms Hunter eases me back into a reclining chair in a client room, telling me to take deep breaths – I'm practically hyperventilating. In her best mothering voice, she tells me to ice my forehead. She then asks me to frown so she can see where is best to inject. All up, I have 10 needles – 5 on either side of my frown lines – injected into my face – worth about \$320. Each needle is like a tiny sting – the pain is not that bad – the thought of Botox is far more terrifying, actually, as is the idea that it could go all wrong and I could end up disfigured. Ah, the price of vanity! Ms Hunter wipes off trickles of blood from my forehead from the injections.

Day 2: Feel headachy. Forehead tender and the skin very tight. Try to stop self from obsessive compulsive frowning check-ups to see if it's working. Nothing yet. Dose self up with Neurofen.

Day3: Eureka! It's nigh impossible to fully frown. In fact, each time I try to frown, my face tightens uncomfortably. I'm shocked by how many times I unconsciously do it – when driving, concentrating, talking.

Day 4: More headaches but my excitement re my new noticeably smoother visage outweighs the discomfort. Start urging loved ones to play newly-formed "try to make me frown" game. Give boss regular updates on changing face.

Day 5: At work cocktail party, proudly show off new line-free forehead to friends and contacts, many of whom confess to having Botox too. No disapproval here.

Day 6: Tired after late night of partying but happy to see my face shows no signs of it. My eyebrows seem lifted and people tell me I look younger and no – I didn't pay them to say this.

Day 7: It's now absolutely impossible to frown, I can't even see my old frown lines and my headaches are gone – I love that! I make a best friend laugh until she cries, by pulling funny faces trying to frown over dinner.



BEFORE AND AFTER: Nicole Carrington has no need to frown after her Botox injections.