Pneumatic Device Touted as Hair-Removal Pain Reliever

BY BETSY BATES
Los Angeles Bureau

SAN DIEGO — A novel pneumatic skin-flattening device may reduce the pain associated with laser or light-source hair removal treatments, although comprehensive data are not yet available to verify the results, said Dr. Gary Lask at the annual meeting of the California Society of Dermatology and Dermalosurgical Society.

The device generates negative pressure of 600 mm Hg when the skin surface is elevated using compression and suction, which flattens the skin surface and causes expulsion of blood into surrounding tissues. This allows for less absorption of laser or light energy by competing chromophores during hair removal procedures, as well as the potential for less erythema, he explained. It appears to reduce pain “by way of the gate theory: afferent inhibition of sensory nerves of the dorsal horn,” said Dr. Lask, director of dermatologic surgery and the dermatology laser center at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Patients treated with various hair removal sources and the adjunctive skin-flattening device had “no pain whatsoever” in Dr. Lask’s practice, even though no topical anesthetic was used, he said. Early results from Israeli researchers suggest that the device may produce “a little more efficacious” reduction of hair growth, less pain, and less erythema than hair removal devices can achieve on their own, he said.

Other surgeons at the conference expressed interest in the device’s mechanism of action, which they said makes more scientific sense than some explanations for how various light and energy devices work, he said. Early results from Israeli researchers suggest that the device may produce “a little more efficacious” reduction of hair growth, less pain, and less erythema than hair removal devices can achieve on their own, he said.

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