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GentleLASE® Plus Treatment of Hirsutism and Hypertrichosis

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Introduction

Hirsutism is defined as “an excess of terminal hair growth in women in a pattern more typical of men.”¹ Hypertrichosis is defined as “an overgrowth of hair not localized to the androgen-dependent areas of the skin.” The causes of hirsutism are numerous and include generalized and localized congenital hypertrichosis. Acquired hypertrichosis may be associated with ingestion of certain drugs (androgens, minoxidil, and cyclosporine, among others) as well as syndromic hypertrichosis. Hirsutism may be familial, associated with endocrine syndromes (such as polycystic ovary disease); tumors of the adrenal gland, pituitary, and ovary; as well as ingestion of drugs including androgens. Regardless of the cause, hirsutism and hypertrichosis may have profound psychological consequences.

Treatments available for hypertrichosis and hirsutism are numerous, and they have differing degrees of effectiveness. Topical medications, waxing, chemical epilation, electrolysis, and laser hair reduction are modalities used to remove excess hair. (A good review of some of these techniques may be found in Olsen, Elise, JAAD, Vol. 40, Feb. 1999.)

I have used the GentleLASE Plus Alexandrite laser for permanent hair reduction for the past several years and describe the treatment of one of my patients.

Method

After an endocrinologic evaluation to rule out underlying hormonal problems, informed consent was obtained. The patient is a 24-year-old woman with a family history of hirsutism. Her skin type was a Fitzpatrick four. Treatment settings were as follows: 12 mm spot size, DCD™ on 70 and fluence of 20 J/cm². Following the first four treatments, the fluence was increased to 25 J/cm². The areas treated included her chin and lip. Prior and following each treatment, the patient was instructed to use 30 SPF sun protection.

Results

“I remember always walking around looking down to the ground so that no one would point fingers at me.... ‘the girl with the beard,’” is how this typical patient with hirsutism felt about herself. Following seven sessions with the GentleLASE Plus, her results were so profound that her self-esteem had significantly improved. Her comment following treatment was, “After each session, my face looked better and better. I have definitely gained confidence.”

Objectively, there is approximately an 80% reduction in hair density (see Figures 1 and 2).

No postoperative hyperpigmentation or scarring was noted with the treatment.

Discussion

The causes as well as the treatments for unwanted hair are numerous. Among the treatments recently gaining popularity, laser hair reduction appears to provide significant reduction in hair density. This report describes the use of the Candela GentleLASE Plus to treat a young woman with hirsutism.

Although there are many lasers that are presently used for this indication, I believe that the Candela system, with its patented cryogen spray, is the best for treating hirsutism and hypertrichosis. Patients with skin types up to and including type V have been effectively treated in my center.

What is sometimes omitted from reports about laser hair removal is the marked difference these treatments can make in a patient's life. Among the patients that we have treated, many have experienced the type of increased self-esteem reported by this patient.

Bibliography

1. Andrews Diseases of the Skin, page 898.



Figure 1—Pretreatment



Figure 2—Post-treatment

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