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# skin | cancer treatment drug becomes anti-aging remedy

by Rob and Carol Trow

**W**HAT SEEMS LIKE A CONTRADICTION—using an anti-cancer treatment as an inexpensive, efficacious solution to fine lines and wrinkles—actually makes sense. What is surprising is that nobody had thought of it until recently.

Cosmetic treatments that help eliminate the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles have been evolving for some time now with many stops and starts. While not as mythological as Jason's search for the Golden Fleece or the crusaders' search for the Holy Grail, researchers, equipment manufacturers and topical skin care producers regularly announce new treatment protocols, devices or ingredients to remedy fine lines, wrinkles and pigmentation. Patients and clients are demanding results, especially in these trying economic times, as they decide where to spend their money. A solution may already be here.

## Damage becomes healing

Lasers have been at the forefront of popular anti-aging treatments for the past decade. They work by causing significant inflammation of the skin. The body, in turn, starts its own natural wound healing cascade that helps stimulate fibroblasts and the production of natural collagen and elastin.

We have been working to develop techniques—as minimally invasive as possible—to help our bodies to generate their own collagen and elastin and fire up the fibroblasts. Medical needling has shown great promise. Medical

grade, state of the art topicals are also making headway. But a well-established treatment created to reduce actinic keratoses may also prove to be highly effective in treating fine lines, wrinkles and pigmentation.

## Cancer likelihood

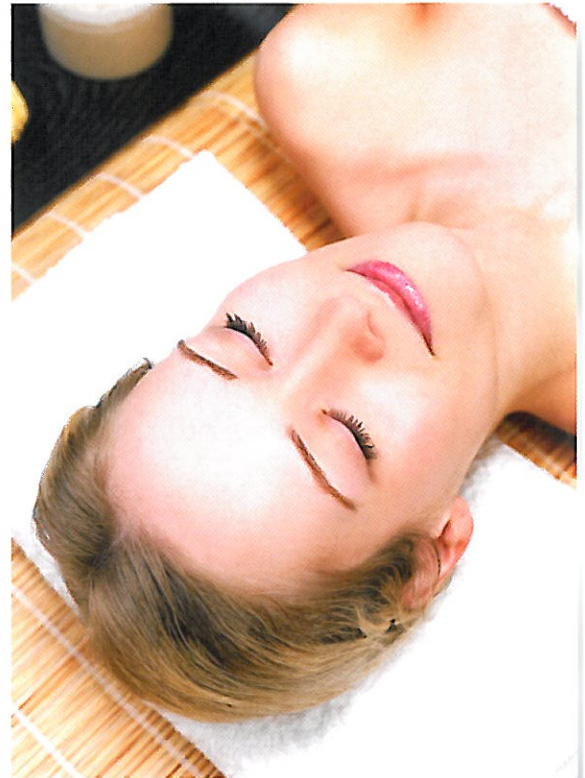
The precancerous condition of actinic keratoses can be the first step of the development of squamous cell carcinoma. Although the vast majority of actinic keratoses remain benign, some studies report that up to 10 percent may advance to squamous cell carcinoma. The more keratoses you have, the greater the chance that one or more may turn into skin cancer. If you have actinic keratoses, it is an indicator that you have sustained sun damage and could develop some form of skin cancer.<sup>1</sup>

## Beneficial side effect

The treatment of choice for actinic keratoses has been a formulation that includes fluorouracil. Dana Sachs of the University of Michigan led a study<sup>2</sup> that showed that applying a cream containing 5 percent fluorouracil to the face twice a day for two weeks improved fine and coarse lines, wrinkles, pigmentation and skin texture when compared to baseline skin condition six months earlier. While the treatment was uncomfortable, the anti-aging side effects were a great boon.

The cream caused the same type of skin inflammation and resulting wound healing cascade that is achieved by lasers at a far lower cost. A likely out-

come of the study is that skin care and spa professionals seek out fluorouracil as a cosmetic treatment regardless of whether or not they are treating actinic keratoses. Why? Because it is inexpensive and it works. ■



1. Skin Cancer Foundation, 2009.

2. Archives of Dermatology. Vol. 145. N 6, June 2009: "Topical fluorouracil for actinic keratoses and photo-aging," Dana L Sachs, et. al.

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