ARMED *to the* TEETH

Dentists are filling more than just teeth with a trend toward cosmetic injectables at dental surgeries

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LIKE mobile phones, the internet and Netflix, it's hard to remember a time before Botox, when the idea of injecting a poison into one's forehead was shocking and repulsive.

Now, in an effort to freeze the wrinkles of time and the search for complexion perfection, women wear their Botox like a badge of honour, celebrating landmark birthdays while smoothing out the landmarks on their face. Even celebrities including Julia Morris, Dannii Minogue and former Australian senator Jacqui Lambie no longer shy away from admitting they partake in injectable intervention.

For those unaware, Botox is a mild type of botulinum toxin, the fearful poison, which, bottled into Botox, was first medically approved in 1989 for the treatment of uncontrolled blinking.

Botox went on to treat neck spasms in 2000 and then, in April 2002, it was finally used as a forehead enhancer, treating the glabella — the corrugated lines that form at the top of the nose between the brows when you stare at your computer screen for too long, frown or look at someone like they are nuts.

Botox is also used as an alleviator of migraine headaches, problem sweating and spasticity associated with a range of neurological disorders.

Thanks in part to the rise of social media, the global market for Botox is forecast to reach $2.9 billion this year.

As the stigma around using injectables has evaporated, they have become cheaper and more accessible.

And as the quest for the perfect "selfie" smile extends beyond perfectly straight, white teeth, dentists are the ones smiling.

Since 2014, the number of Australian dentists offering Botox and filler injections has been growing "exponentially", according to the Australasian Academy of Dento-Facial Aesthetics, which is a training provider established in 2009.

It is estimated up to 1000 dentists in Australia now perform Botox and filler procedures, which involve injecting hyaluronic acid gel under the skin to plump lips and other areas such as the nasolabial lines that run from nose to mouth.

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"Australian dentistry is still very much in its infancy in terms of the numbers who are offering these services, but that is changing at an exponential rate," says AADFA's managing director Myles Holt, a dentist-turned-entrepreneur.

But the industry pioneer says Australia has been quite late to the party.

"It's now at a level in the UK where dentists are accepted as the 'go-to' people for facial Botox, skin rejuvenation and dermal fillers, especially for lip enhancements," Holt says. "It won't be long before Australia follows suit."

Holt says demand for Botox and filler injections as an add-on to dental appointments is growing daily.

"Our office receives dozens of calls a day from patients seeking a dentist in their area," he says.

"While dentists are not stopping being dentists, these are two new services being offered in Australian dental practices that are seeing considerable growth."

Dr Giulia D'Anna offers anti-wrinkle injections, dermal filler enhancements, non-surgical thread lift treatments, cryotherapy, laser therapy and a number of chemical and LED facials at her Balwyn North boutique practice, iDental, and says demand is growing since her initial training more than five years ago.

"There has definitely been a switch in people's perception of ageing; there was initial concern from patients that they didn't want anyone to know they had cosmetic work done, but now patients are more willing to ask about cosmetic procedures," she says.

"Injectables make up around 30 per cent of my business, however we rarely perform these in isolation.

"Most of our patients combine cosmetic injectable treatments with other procedures, whether it's working on the teeth to get the best smile result and then work outwards to achieve a full cosmetic result, or referring patients to our dermal or skin therapist who also operates within the practice."

A fellow of the International Academy for Dento-Facial Aesthetics, D'Anna, who has also been training dentists in the industry for the past three years, says both the taboo around consumers artificially restoring the natural glow of their 20s and having dentists perform the procedures has improved dramatically.

"The landscape for dentists has changed quite a lot in the last five years," she says. "When I first did my training, there was resistance within the dental profession itself in making the changes to what is considered our scope of practice.

"I may have been seen as a rebel by some dentists in the early days, because most dentists were sticking to the parameters set at university; however with extensive training, I have always felt like I was at the forefront of the best treatment offerings available to really make a difference.

"It makes sense for dentists to offer cosmetic services because dentists already have the capability to extend our care to the face, and bridge our skills for greater patient care. We intensely study anatomy of the head, neck and chest at university, so our perception of a great cosmetic outcome is trained within us from the very beginning. We look at symmetry of the face, proportion, colour and facial flow; on a daily basis, we work with pharmaceuticals to make procedures comfortable and our level of hygiene is exceptional.

Face value: Dentist Dr Amelia Judson at Smile Solutions, Melbourne CBD with Dannielle Johnson in the chair.

PICTURE JAKE NOWAKOWSKI

"With all of these valuable assets in our skill set, it makes perfect sense to not limit ourselves, or our patients.

"Teeth do not sit in isolation. Making your smile look incredible is not possible if your face isn't playing its part. The true artistry of dentistry is when we can work on all the parts of the face to create wellness, radiance and the picture of health."

D'Anna says cosmetic procedures improve the self-esteem of the patient as much as fixing a cracked tooth.

"For me, when I can create a beautiful smile, that works with proportioned lips, and sits below well-defined cheeks, and youthful looking eyes and healthy skin, then I have done a great job.

"I have had patients tell me that they have found better jobs or life partners and have a more positive outlook on life because they feel better about themselves.

"Simple things they have never done before, like taking a selfie and posting it on social media, is also really common feedback from clients, which is so humbling to see."

And while the trend for dentist-performed injectables is still relatively new in Australia, D'Anna says people should be more wary of having cosmetic treatments done at a day spa or salons, or being injected with unregulated substances, by untrained hands, than receiving treatment from a dentist.

"The standard that dentists hold themselves up to, is incredibly high," she says. "Before and after every patient, we thoroughly clean our work environment, sterilise our instruments and maintain a level of hygiene that is impeccable and we hold mandatory records of these processes.

"Dentists have a mandatory requirement to attend continuing professional development to maintain a high level of current education in these areas, too. Every dentist is registered with AHPRA, which also ensures accountability for our treatments, including cosmetic injectables.

"The same standards cannot be guaranteed in other facilities ... where these mandatory conditions are not enforced or even required."

Dr Amelia Judson, from Smile Solutions in Melbourne CBD has just completed training to offer anti-ageing treatments to her patients, and credits social media with the booming industry.

"The social media culture has definitely had an impact on the way people see themselves in a very aesthetically driven world," Judson says.

"Botox and fillers are no longer reserved for older age groups, but younger people are also wanting to achieve a holistic smile.

I KNEW SHE WOULDN'T LET ME LEAVE WITH A FACE COMPLETELY FROZEN

"It definitely makes sense for there to be some crossover with dentistry, particularly because dentistry is no longer just about filling and drilling."

Judson characterises the teeth as a picture and the mouth as a frame.

"Botox is a useful adjunct to help enhance the mouth — like using Botox to lower the lip line to hide a high, gummy smile," she says.

Judson admits there are still some "grey areas" surrounding Botox, but as the industry becomes more mainstream, consumers will be more vigilant about who performs procedures.

"Within the injectables world, the qualifications required to perform the procedures are quite vague," she says. "As a dentist, I have had more than 12 years' medical experience and (in) learning the intricacies of the facial anatomy, while a beautician with none of that can also offer injectables and charge the same amount.

"There has definitely been a consumer push to provide the service in a very safe environment and, as clients become more educated, particularly around insurance, I think they will be looking more and more to dentists as their go-to for injectables."

Dannielle Hempseed, 35, happily pokes fun at her own and society's obsession with appearances, but decided to try Botox while at her dentist when she became unhappy with the way she looked.

"I was dubious at first, but I thought I was starting to look grouchy and I'm not an unhappy or grumpy person at all," Hempseed says. "I chose a dentist because I trusted their cleanliness and my relationship with Dr Amelia Judson at Smile Solutions.

"I knew she wouldn't let me leave with a face completely frozen or no longer looking and feeling like myself. I just wanted to look like the best version of me." **WITH SALLY GLAETZER**

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