

MONTREAL / QUEBEC

Boys just want to have Botox (discreetly)

The dude looked suspicious. He was sporting a fedora and a trench coat with the collar turned up. But it was the shades that gave him away. The sun had long disappeared from the sky. He was skulking around the entrance of a recently opened clinic in the west end. The following morning, a friend who happens to work in the area was heading over to advise the folks at the clinic about this suspicious fellow. But he was stopped in his tracks when he noticed a few more guys trying their best not to be recognized outside the place. Clearly a case for Inspector Clouse-au. In his absence, I decide to volunteer for the mission and visit MediSpa Jouvence and seek the insights of its staff about this strange behaviour.

Lorie Docker, a medical esthetician and co-proprietor of the clinic, chuckles knowingly upon hearing this tale. Remember the guilt-ridden old days when kids would skulk around drug-store counters in search of condoms but didn't want friends or family members to catch them in the transaction? Well, Docker says there is a similar lev-

el of self-consciousness involved in the services her clinic offers.

It's about boys and Botox and laser hair-removal and other weapons in the arsenal to combat the aging process.

It's also about girls and Botox and laser hair-removal and Obagi and glycolic peels at the clinic. The girls, however, tend not to be inhibited or embarrassed about seeking solutions to wrinkles and the like. But boys being boys, they don't exactly go blah-blah-blah about Botox with their buddies.

This is a special breed of boy A baby-boomer with an aversion to aging. A baby-boomer with bucks to pay \$325 for one Botox treatment and \$399 for one session of laser hair-removal from their backs. A baby-boomer who wants, in the words of that classic tune, to smile even though his heart is aching, to smile even though his heart is breaking - because a cemented smile is all his with Botox.

"It's not easy for the guys to build up their courage to come in," says Docker, a former Canadian Olympic middle-distance runner. "They will walk by a few times, and when the



BILL BROWNSTEIN

coast is clear they will come in. They ask if they're perverts for considering these treatments. We reassure them that a lot of their neighbours are doing this. Still, guys don't often talk about glycolic peels around the water cooler."

Many of the men come at the urging of their wives or girlfriends. But there are also the actors, athletes and professionals who feel that a Botox treatment or laser hair-removal is all that stands in the way of their advancement in this youth-oriented culture of ours.

"Few want to get old, and if they can avoid looking older, they will," Docker says. "Men are now so nervous about losing jobs to younger guys, about trying to retain their youth. And they are

becoming more aware of unsightly hair on their backs, chests and necks."

What a difference a decade or two can make. Back in the last millennium, hirsute gents were considered hunks. Legend were the tales of the hairless who figured enhanced virility was but a chest-wig away. No longer.

In lieu of some over-the-counter remedy, Docker, who works in tandem with a plastic surgeon, insists laser hair-removal is no muss, no fuss and no bruising. She pledges the clinic provides immediate and nonsurgical gratification for Botox and Obagi treatments as well.

Clients rarely complain about side-effects, but Docker recalls the case of an employee who felt the laser treatments had produced undesired results. "She freaked when she noticed a man had developed breasts a few weeks after having had a laser treatment. But I had forgotten to inform her that he was undergoing a sex change and had breast implants between visits."

Docker, 40, practices what she preaches. She's had Botox treatments. "Now, I can no longer frown," she de-

clares, flashing her perma-grin. Not if she doesn't get injected every four to six months, that is.

Ah, the wonders of the botulism virus - from which, in case you'd already forgotten, the Botox is culled.

"It's been all the rage in Hollywood for years," Docker says.

"Now the men are closing the gap with the women in this department. They want to look young, too. They're working out more than ever to stay fit. But while they can keep smiling, they can do little about damage done to their skin by the sun."

Which explains the sudden popularity of Obagi. Developed in - where else but - California, it is a therapy designed to rejuvenate and restore skin damaged by the sun.

Or, of course, people could simply be prudent and lather on the sunblock to avoid the problem.

"Some might dismiss this all as vanity," Docker says. "But it's more than that. Boys just want to have fun, too."

Methinks there is a song here. * *Bill Brownstein's E-mail address is bbrownst@thegazette.southam.ca.*