

## Licensing a hairy issue

Since January this year, when a young woman in Raleigh, North Carolina, died of lidocaine poisoning, considerable attention has been given to laser hair-removal practices. At the N.C. State capital, House and Senate bills have been introduced that would add optional "laser hair removal certification" to electrologists' licenses.

The North Carolina Medical Board was already reviewing its guidelines on laser procedure when Shiri Berg, 22, died of a reaction to the numbing lidocaine gel as she was driving to her appointment for treatment.

The board now must consider whether it should strengthen the current guidelines for laser hair removal treatments given under "a physician's supervision." Thomas Mansfield, the Medical Board's legal director, said the board could possibly require that doctors examine these patients and actually be on the site when laser hair removal is performed.

Mansfield said that the medical board had not taken a position on the bills to create the laser certification for electrologists. But, he said, restrictions in the use of lasers would effectively curb their use by people who are not licensed.

In North Carolina at this time, almost

anyone can buy a laser. And all they need to operate a hair-removal practice is a little training and an agreement with a doctor to be their medical director. The state's Licensing Commission has asked the General Assembly to create new certification for those who wish to use hair-removal lasers; a measure that supporters say would allow consumers to make more informed choices.

Trudy Brown, chairwoman of the N.C. Board of Electrolysis Examiners and owner/operator of laser clinics in Greensboro and High Point, N.C. says, "Right now, it seems that anybody and everybody is getting into it [laser hair removal] without any background or training."

At this point, electrologists are licensed in N.C. — laser technicians are not. But bills sponsored by Sen. Kay Hagan and Rep. Maggie Jeffus, both Greensboro democrats, would like to see an optional component added to the electrologists' certification, whereby licensed electrologists could, with additional training, become a state-certified "laser clinician."

Not everyone thinks the proposed changes are a good idea. "The laser operators should have their own board," said Ronda Jones, who runs Aboutface Electrology in Kernersville, N.C. "I would like

the electrolysis board to focus more on policing electrologists, particularly those whose licenses were grandfathered in when the state created the electrologist license more than a decade ago.

Ms. Jones thinks that compared to electrolysis, laser hair removal is new and unproven. She points to studies that show laser treatments can only claim a 'reduction' in hair growth: "It doesn't permanently kill hair, like electrolysis does," she says.

Neither of the House and Senate bills to create laser certification have yet been scheduled for a hearing.

## Women with PCOS are at increased risk for cardiovascular disease

Women who suffer from polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), one of the most common causes of female infertility in the U.S., have an increased chance of developing cardiovascular disease, according to a new study published this month in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, published by The Endocrine Society. The study also found that the metabolic syndrome is more prevalent in women with PCOS, and that women with both conditions would exhibit more hormonal and menstrual cycle irregularity than women with PCOS only.

It is estimated that five to 10 percent of reproductive aged women suffer from PCOS. While there is no actual cure for the syndrome, researchers are working to identify effective treatments as well as possible causes for the condition. "Our study highlights the relationship between PCOS, metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease," explained senior author, Dr. John Nestler, Professor of Medicine; Chair, Division of Endocrinology & Metabolism in the Department of Internal Medicine at the Medical College of Virginia. "These findings, indicate that women with PCOS should automatically be screened for the metabolic syndrome, to prevent the risk of early-onset cardiovascular disease," said Dr. Nestler.

After reviewing medical charts for 161 women, study investigators identified 106 women (46 women with PCOS and the metabolic syndrome; and 60 women with PCOS alone) for participation and analysis. The study revealed that women with PCOS are nearly two times as likely to have the metabolic syndrome

## THE WAY WE WERE Electrolysis 88 Years Ago

PHILADELPHIA, 1917 — Although various methods have been devised for the destruction of superfluous hairs, there are practically but three methods to be considered; depilatories, electrolysis, and the X-ray. In the vast majority of cases electrolysis is the method of choice. It is the only safe method of permanently destroying the hair.

When the number of hairs is very great, their removal by electrolysis is practically impossible, owing to the length of time required; under such circumstances the X-ray may be used, giving an exposure just sufficient to produce a mild erythema. This agent is to be employed, however, with the utmost care, since great harm may be done with it even in the hands of an experienced operator. Ill effects, such as a persistent dermatitis, followed by disfiguring telangiectases, and atrophy of the skin, may appear months or even years after its employment.

— Milton B. Hartzell, A.M., M.D., LL.D.  
Professor of Dermatology in the University of Pennsylvania  
Diseases of the Skin: Their Pathology and Treatment

in comparison with women without PCOS in the general population. Women demonstrating characteristics of both PCOS and the metabolic syndrome were found to also have more severe insulin resistance.

The researchers concluded that the metabolic syndrome and its related conditions, are common in women with PCOS, putting these women at even greater increased risk for developing cardiovascular disease.

## California Bill Targets Threading

Originating in Cleopatra's time, the ancient hair removal process called "threading" is raising the eyebrows of some California State inspectors.

A new piece of legislation in California seeks to protect practitioners of threading from being fined for "mysterious violations."

The California Board of Barbering and Cosmetology does not regulate threading. But that has not stopped inspectors from fining one practitioner over the use of talcum powder, which is used to highlight facial hairs targeted for removal.

The practitioners are confused over the state's rules and regulations of the ancient practice, and many are being fined for an unlicensed activity that they don't regulate.

The threaders are getting help from Assemblyman Rudy Bermudez, who represents the 56th Assembly District in the California State Legislature, and is proposing a new bill to clarify the situation.

"We need consistency on what is a violation and what is not," said Bermudez.

A spokesperson for the state board said they are supporting Bill AB163 that would allow threading to be done without a Cosmetology license and allows incidental eyebrow trimming. This would be in effect until July 1, 2007.

## Laser client died of lidocaine overdose

An autopsy report released in February has confirmed that North Carolina student, Shiri Berg, 22, died of a lidocaine overdose that she self-administered in advance of a laser hair removal treatment at Premier Body Laser and Skin Clinic, in Raleigh, NC. The autopsy revealed that Ms. Berg suffered heart failure and brain damage after she spread the pre-

scription-strength cream she purchased from Premier Body Clinics from her waist to her ankles and wrapped her legs in plastic wrap.

On the morning of Dec. 28, 2004, a motorist found Ms. Berg in her locked car, unconscious and having convulsions, on the side of route I-40. She apparently went into a coma soon after that, and never regained consciousness. She died on Jan. 10.

"The issue that endangered the young lady's life," said Dr. Robert Clark of the Cary Skin Center, which performs laser hair removal, "was that half of her body surface area was covered with a lidocaine preparation."

Clark said that wrapping cellophane around a numbing cream is not a problem. The danger, he said, "lies in the amount of cream that is used — and how much of the body is covered."

The Berg family's attorney said that a Premier Body Clinics staffer sold Ms Berg the prescription-strength numbing cream, but did not have a permit to write prescriptions. Dr. Ira David Uretzky, the spa's medical director, is accused of improperly prescribing "a powerful numbing gel" generally used by laser hair removal clients.

The North Carolina Medical Board said that Dr. Uretzky had failed to take a medical history or perform a physical

exam before giving the spa client a prescription, as required by law.

The board said it could limit, suspend, or revoke the license of someone found guilty of these allegations. A hearing is tentatively set for June 15. Dr. Uretzky is listed as an ear, nose and throat specialist at a clinic in north Raleigh.

Ms. Berg's friends say she had been told to apply the cream right before her appointment and wrap herself in cellophane to intensify the anesthetic effect. The product, called Laser Gel 10-10, is a prescription compound containing two serious anesthetics; Lidocaine (10%), and Tetracaine (10%). Ms. Berg's prescription came with no warning about potential side effects, nor risk of coma.

The board also said that soon after Dr. Uretzky became medical director of the spa he ordered 142 tubes of the gel from Triangle Compounding Pharmacy, in Cary. They were inappropriately sold to the spa's customers, and the doctor failed to ensure that the spa's staff was appropriately trained and supervised. Neither was he properly registered with the North Carolina Board of Pharmacy.

Ms. Berg was apparently not the first to have this happen to her. Almost three years earlier, Blanca Bolanos went into convulsions in her car while driving to a laser hair removal clinic in Tucson, Arizona. Bolanos was in a coma for two years



## HAIR FLUFF

### North Korea urges men to cut hair short

In a campaign against "corrupt capitalist" lifestyle," state television, radio and newspapers in North Korea are urging men to cut their hair short and to dress tidily.

A crew cut, no longer than 1 cm to 5 cm [two inches], twice every month, is recommended. Men over 50 may grow their hair to the extravagant length of 7 cm, to hide the effects of balding. The reasons given for the crackdown are "health, hygiene, and intelligence." Pyongyang television notes that long hair "consumes a great deal of nutrition and thus robs the brain of energy."

State radio says "tidy attire is important in repelling the enemies' maneuvers to infiltrate corrupt capitalist ideas and lifestyle." North Korean men hoping to emulate their "Dear Leader," Kim Jong-il, by sporting a bouffant hairstyle are instructed to do their bit for socialism by cutting it off!

The ruling communist party newspaper, Rodong Sinmun, cautions that inappropriate appearance under foreign influence can lead to national decay. "People who dress and live in the style of others will become fools, and that nation will come to ruin," says Rodong.

Story filed: Seoul, South Korea, 1:39 pm Sunday 9 January 2005.

before dying. Court papers say she used a cream of 6 percent Lidocaine and 6 percent Tetracaine.

## Dectro receives accolades for computerized epilator

Dectro International has received the 2005 Canadian Innovation of the Year award for its revolutionary new computerized epilator, the Apilus Platinum. The award, presented this spring at the 4th Aesthetics & Wellness Canadian Congress, in Montreal, recognizes the vision and creativity of the Quebec manufacturer.

The Apilus Platinum feature that most impressed the jury was the ultra-rapid 27 MHz frequency (twice as fast as the frequency used by other epilators on the market) and the high comfort level this provides for electrologists' clients. The Dectro company was further lauded for the technological advances it has brought to the field of electrolysis.

The offices and showroom for Dectro's operations in the USA were moved in April 2005. Dectro California's new, larger quarters, give the Company office space that better suits its needs and allows for the display of a much wider range of products and equipment. The new premises are located at: 1715 East Wilshire, suite 712, Santa Ana CA 92705. Phone: 714-550-9980 or toll free 1-888-332-8763, and on the web at [dectro-cal@dectro.com](mailto:dectro-cal@dectro.com).

## SPAA says spa-goers deserve higher industry standards

An assessment of the spa industry in America, conducted in 2005 by The Spa Association (SPAA), has revealed the sad fact that many of the treatments offered by neighborhood spas and medical spa facilities do not match expectations. "Too many spa-goers," says SPAA, "are emerg-

ing from laser hair removal treatments, non-ablative skin rejuvenation and other medical grade spa services, with scars to show for their efforts."

The spa industry, the third largest leisure industry in the US, is regulated by individual states. While some of the states have stringent regulations that are carefully enforced, others have decades-old rules on record that have not kept up with the tremendous growth of the spa industry. The American Society for Dermatologic Surgery says that half of its 2,400 members have reported an increase in complications in the past year from laser procedures performed by non-medical personnel.

Some states require that only doctors can do treatments such as laser hair removal and Botox injections, while others say only a doctor's supervision is required. The rest have no laws on the issue.

SPAA says the lack of regulation is hurting the spa industry's reputation, and that it is imperative that strong measures be adopted to safeguard the consumer. To this end, the Association has published a formidable list of "laser procedures that went wrong" — mostly due to technicians doing treatments outside their scope of practice, with faulty materials, or without sufficient medical attention as a part of the treatment at a spa or medical spa. Only the cases involving hair removal are listed below:

Kim McMillin, 40, from New York went to a Manhattan spa for laser hair removal that was performed by a spa technician. Ms. McMillin now has a zebra-like pattern of raised scars and discolored patches on the right side of her face.

Source — WashingtonPost.com

A 20-year-old Virginia man and Coast Guard cadet died of allergic reaction to drugs given to him before a laser hair removal treatment.

Source — WashingtonPost.com.

Shiri Berg, 22, a North Carolina State student died of a lidocaine overdose, a common numbing cream applied to the skin before a laser hair removal treatment. On her way to her appointment, police found her on the side of the road having seizures in her car. There is an ongoing investigation of a second female college student who died under circumstances involving the same drug.

Source — WRAL.com

Terri Bowling, 36, of Pennsylvania, suffered deep second degree burns on her legs from laser hair removal procedure performed by a spa technician.

Source — WashingtonPost.com

Ten people in London and Israel had reticulate erythema appear after diode laser treatment for hair removal.

Source — National Center for Biotechnology Information ([ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov))

To address its concerns about unprofessional conduct within the realm of neighborhood spas and medical spa facilities, SPAA began last July a commitment-based membership program called Spa Secure, designed to "lift performance thresholds for North America's spa industry, and create a spa standard system that is recognizable by consumers."

## EAC Electrology Task Force makes presentation to State Board

Jean Ogren and Patsy Kirby represented the Electrologists' Association of California (EAC) at the State Board of Barbering and Cosmetology's Licensing and Examination Committee Meeting, held on Apr. 24, 2005.

On behalf of the EAC's Electrology Task Force, Ms. Kirby (who is concurrently Executive Director of the American Electrology Association) had prepared detailed packets for the Board members on Continuing Education, Telangiectasia, Topical Anesthetics, and Comparison of Invasive Procedures.

Despite the fact that her comprehensive 1-hour exposition had to be condensed into an allotted 20 minutes, Ms. Kirby was complimented on her intelligent and well-organized Power Point presentation.

Reporting back to the EAC, Ms. Kirby

## Did You Know?

Light is the fastest known thing in the universe. Light waves of the kind employed every day by electrologists to effect permanent hair removal, travel 186,282 miles per second (299,792,458 kilometers per second) — the speed of light in a vacuum — as do all types of electromagnetic radiation including radio waves, X-rays, cosmic rays, infrared radiation, microwaves, thermal radiation, Gamma rays, visible light, and ultraviolet radiation. Light travels from the sun to earth (a distance averaging 92,957,000 miles) in 8.3168708 minutes (say 8 min. and 18 sec.).



*Patsy Kirby represented the EAC at the State Board Committee Meeting.*

and Ms. Ogren said that after the presentation, the Board instructed them to contact the State Medical Board on those matters involving telangiectasia, and topical anesthetics. They were also told that EAC needs to prioritize its issues. Della Condon, president of the SBBC, said she was prepared to discuss these issues with EAC's Electrology Task Force and would help them "make up a strategic plan."

## **FDA Warns Consumers about Sales of Laser Products on the Internet**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is aware that some laser products being sold on the internet may not meet federal safety requirements and should not be

available for purchase by the general public. In some cases, these products are overpowered and may be unsafe if not used responsibly. In other cases, these products are intended for use only by licensed medical professionals, trained operators, or other approved users.

FDA is concerned about recent reports of laser products directed at aircraft — a potentially hazardous situation. The agency is particularly concerned about the increased availability of overpowered green laser pointers. Overpowered green laser pointers are those that may have been modified to emit more radiation than the manufacturer's original product.

FDA's authority is over the manufacturers of laser products. These products must meet a federal standard for the amount of radiation they can emit and must be properly labeled. FDA is working to identify manufacturers of overpowered green laser pointers and other illegal laser products and will take action to prevent unsafe products from being sold in the United States. If illegal products are imported into the U.S., they may be refused entry, returned to the seller, or destroyed.

FDA recommends that consumers be cautious when buying laser products over the internet. Consumers may unknowingly purchase an illegal laser product or may lose their money if the illegal product is refused entry into the U.S. or destroyed. Consumers should be aware that:

1. Medical lasers may only be sold to licensed medical practitioners.

## **Doris Young, Founding director of FCEA, Dies**

*By Frank Kovacs*

It is with utmost regret that the Federation of Canadian Electrolysis Associations (FCEA) learned about the passing of Doris Young after a lengthy illness on February 2, 2005 in Alberta Beach, Alberta, Canada.

Doris, a founding director in the incorporation of the FCEA, for a period of six years diligently and with dedication served on the Board and greatly contributed to its success. Her efforts and passion for the benefit of the profession in Canada will always be remembered by the FCEA members and its current and former directors.

2. Class IIIb and class IV laser light show projectors, identified as such on the label, may only be sold by or to individuals or firms with current, approved laser light show variances from FDA. Laser products that are advertised as uncertified components may only be sold to other manufacturers and may not be sold to the public for general use.
3. Laser products should have certification and identification labels stating that the product complies with the federal laser standard.  
Complies with 21 CFR 1040.10 and 1040.11; Manufactured or distributed by; Date of Manufacture; Complies with 21 CFR Chapter 1, Subchapter J
4. Products should have a warning label advising the user to avoid exposure to the laser radiation.

Consumers who can not verify the above, or do not understand what it means, probably should not sell or purchase the products.

If anyone has any questions about a laser product you are considering offering for sale or purchasing on the internet, contact FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health at 240-276-0326.

They can also report web sites that they suspect are illegally selling laser products online at [www.fda.gov/oc/buyonline/buy-onlineform.htm](http://www.fda.gov/oc/buyonline/buy-onlineform.htm).

## **Wallace Roberts, One of the First Instructors of Laser and Light-based Hair Removal Technologies, Dies**

*By Shelby Owens*

Wallace "Wally" Roberts was born into an electrolysis household. In 1967, his mother was the founder of the Eleanor F. Roberts Institute of Electrology in Boston — the first fully approved school of electrolysis in the state of Massachusetts — which Wally successfully managed for many years following his mother's retirement in 1980.

Wally was one of the charter members of the Society of Clinical and Medical Electrologists (later to become the Society of Clinical and Medical Hair Removal) and remained active in that organization for almost two decades.

In the early 1990s he became actively involved in laser hair removal, and eventually moved to Naples, Florida where he founded the LightSpeed Training Institute, a state-of-art facility offering world class education in laser and light-based hair removal technologies.

We were saddened to learn of Wally's unexpected death on Monday, May 9, 2005 at his home in Naples. He had been recuperating from back surgery for the last few months and died in his sleep from heart failure. He is survived by his mother, Eleanor; wife, Diane; daughter, Ashley, and four sons; Craig, Michael, Mark and Douglas.