Laser Hair Removal Headed For the Homefront?

*New study finds portable, hand-held laser device safe and effective for consumer use.*

Wausau, WI (PRWEB) September 20, 2007 -- Consumers using a first-of-its-kind laser hair removal device designed for at-home use experienced both excellent short-term, single-treatment hair removal and excellent sustained hair removal with periodic treatments, according to a new study recently published in Lasers in Surgery and Medicine (July 2007 issue), the peer-reviewed professional journal of the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery (ASLMS).

In his article entitled “Simulated Consumer Use of a Battery-Powered, Hand-Held, Portable Diode Laser (810 nm) for Hair Removal: A Safety, Efficacy and Ease-of-Use Study,” laser expert Ronald G. Wheeland, MD, professor and chief of dermatologic surgery, University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, Mo., reports that overall this novel diode laser technology is highly effective, has an excellent benefit-to-risk ratio, and could soon offer consumers a viable new treatment option for at-home removal of unwanted or excess hair.

“Our study results are very exciting because they demonstrated that a heterogeneous group of people could teach themselves how to use the laser hair removal device safely and effectively simply by reviewing the product’s packaging label and background materials,” said Dr. Wheeland. “Thus, we can anticipate that this low-cost, eye-safe, portable device could make laser hair removal much more widely available and appropriate for over-the-counter consumer use.”

In a simulated home-use environment, subjects were divided into two treatment groups – a Treatment Group of 77 appropriate users; and a Non-Treatment Group of 44 inappropriate users who did not meet the criteria for using the portable diode laser device – i.e., mainly individuals with naturally light or grey hair or dark skin tones. All treatments and observations were performed at the dermatology clinic, with consumers in the Treatment Group performing three self-administered treatments at three week intervals with no instructions other than the package labeling. These subjects chose two body sites they wanted to treat from a list that included the underarm area, leg, arm, abdomen, chest, upper lip, bikini, or the nape of the neck (men only).

Other than assistance from the clinical staff in identifying the treatment area during sessions, all study subjects performed each treatment entirely themselves. This included choosing the level of energy from the three available high, medium and low settings. The device labeling instructed subjects that higher settings were likely to achieve better results and that they should choose the highest setting possible without excessive discomfort.

Effectiveness of the self-treatment device was primarily measured by a reduction of hair count from the first visit to each subsequent visit. The mean hair count reduction for all treatments in the Treatment Group was considered statistically significant at all visits except at the sixth visit (due to the natural hair growth cycle). Specifically, subjects experienced 61% mean hair count reduction three weeks after the first treatment; 70% three weeks after the second treatment, and 60% one month after the third treatment. Mean hair reduction at 12 months following the third treatment was an impressive 33%.

While the portable diode laser was clearly effective in reducing the amount of hair in the treated areas, the device also proved to be safe when used by appropriate users, noted Dr. Wheeland. The only observed...
side effect was mild-to-moderate redness, which typically resolved in less than 30 minutes, and slight pain during treatment. Overall, subjects reported being very satisfied with their results.

By comparison, consumers in the Non-Treatment Group were given a single, staff-administered laser pulse at the maximum energy setting of the device on a non-cosmetic, hair-bearing site to determine the worst-case incidence of side effects at the maximum fluence. In the Non-Treatment Group, a few subjects experienced mild blisters after treatment; those with darker skin types carried an increased risk of injury. Still, in all of these subjects, the blister resolved without any medical intervention needed.

Based on our study results relative to efficacy, safety, pain levels, and usability of the device and its labeling, this new laser device could offer consumers a nice at-home complement to office-based laser hair removal procedures, especially for localized areas of excess hair such as the lip, chin or sideburns, added Dr. Wheeland.

The American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery (ASLMS) is the world’s preeminent resource for laser research, safety, education, and clinical knowledge. Founded in 1980, ASLMS promotes excellence in patient care by advancing clinical application of lasers and related technologies. For more information and physician referrals, please log on to the Society’s website: www.aslms.org.

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