Cheek to Chic

Fill ’er up! Which makeover will save our wasted faces first?

April 1, 2004 By Tim Murphy

Blame lipodystrophy on HIV meds zapping certain parts of the brain that control fat, Dutch researchers report. File that under “another lipo theory that won’t give us our faces back anytime soon.” Focus instead on three promising facial fillers, contenders from “Take This Mug and Stuff It,” May 2003:

New-Fill Late last year, French researchers found that some 50 HIV vets with severe facial lipoatrophy (fat loss) still gave good face two years after four or five injections (about $750 each) of this polylactic acid. Gervais Frechette, MD, of New York, and Doug Mest, MD, of California, who’ve tested New-Fill in HIVers stateside, echo those results. But the FDA prohibited it in late 2001, reclassifying it as a “medical device.” Dermik (www.dermik.com), hoping to market New-Fill in the U.S., will soon apply for FDA approval. Meanwhile, try DAAIR buyer’s club (www.daair.org, 973.497.2333).

SilSkin Diane James says her company (www.richard-james.com) is raising funds for trials (with docs like LA’s Derek Jones, MD) for HIV-specific approval of this new formulation of liquid injectable silicone—permanent Silikon 1000 droplets—which has restored some HIVers’ cheeks in six to 10 visits (at a cheeky $700 per visit). James says prelim data show it’s safe and effective three years after injection—by a trained doctor, she stresses, not “some drag queen I’ve heard about who’s giving her own injections at lower prices.”

Bio-Alcamid The growing number of HIVers traveling to Tijuana’s Clinic’estetica say this Italian injectable gel stays put—and is even removable. Pursuing HIVer-specific FDA trials, Clinic’estetica’s Anna Love is teaming with veteran LA HIV doc Michael Gottlieb, MD, who says they’re in early talks with the agency. Down Mexico way, Anna and co. say they can fix your face in two treatments for $4,500 total—“no matter how severe,” says HIVer customer Ellen Hahn, who now works for Anna (www.clinicestetica.com). But Ellen—that price tag! “You make it a priority to get your face back,” she says. “I went down the list of things I didn’t need, like cable TV.”

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