

Pulsed-Light Device Allows for Home Hair Removal

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CHICAGO — A new low-energy, pulsed-light device promises a safe way for women to do their own long-term hair removal at home for the first time, according to Dr. Tina Alster.

The handheld device was tested for safety and efficacy by 20 women aged 32-56 years, with Fitzpatrick skin types 1 through 5 and brown or black terminal

hair, Dr. Alster said at the annual meeting of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery.

The device manufacturer recently submitted the product for 510(k) clearance from the Food and Drug Administration, but a decision is not expected before the end of the year, according to company spokesman Tom Goslau. The Silk'n hair removal device (HomeSkinovations Ltd., Tel Aviv) emits wavelengths of 475-1,200 nm and fluences up to 5 J/mm².

Hair removal is the top skin treatment worldwide, with total annual sales approaching \$9 billion, said Dr. Alster, who is medical director of the Washington (D.C.) Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery.

"The low end of the market—shaving and waxing—constitutes \$5.7 billion of the total, with the remaining \$3 billion coming from high-end procedures such as laser and light treatment," she said, adding that only 2% of the population can afford professional treatment.

Of the 20 women, 7 treated themselves under the axillary region, 3 on the forearm, 5 in the inguinal region, and 5 on the lower legs. "All women self-administered three or four light treatments at 2-week intervals in our office so that we could make sure they weren't using the device more often than necessary," Dr. Alster said.

"We saw hair reductions ranging from 40% to 75%, with the legs and arms responding slightly better than the underarm and bikini region," she said in an interview, adding that the return of hair was slightly higher on the legs, though lower-leg hair reduction averaged 61% at 3-month follow-up. And unlike some earlier experimental devices, the Silk'n caused no complications or pain.

Respectively, the 1- and 3-month hair removal results were axillae, 48% and 42%; arms, 59% and 58%; inguinal area, 48% and 40%; and legs, 73.5% and 61%.

"This pulsed-light unit is portable, lightweight, has an internal cooling fan, uses regular household current, provides a light pulse every 3.5 seconds, and is self-contained, making protective eyewear unnecessary," explained Dr. Alster, who has conducted research for Zars Pharma and Galderma.

The equipment used in this study was provided by HomeSkinovations.

If clearance is received, the Silk'n will go on the market at a price of between \$250 and \$500, she said. "My guess is that many of those who have been getting hair removal treatments at spas will purchase these devices and do this in the privacy of their homes."

Home hair removal equipment will not have much financial effect on dermatology, Dr. Alster predicted. "We're not getting 98% of people anyway, and I think [home treatment] is an idea whose time has come, and I think it's going to take off. Buying this device will cost less than a single treatment in my office." ■



A patient's underarm area is shown above before hair removal treatment.



The same underarm is shown 1 month after self-administration of the device.

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