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VITAL SIGNS

Nicholas Bakalar

AFTEREFFECTS

Benefits of Botox: First, Wrinkles; Now, Scars

The wrinkle-fighter Botox can also be useful in preventing scars resulting from cuts to the face, a new study suggests.

Movement of facial muscles near the wound can make scarring worse, and the Botox temporarily paralyzes the muscles.

Researchers randomly assigned 31 patients with wounds to the forehead to receive either Botox or a placebo injection right after the wounds were closed. Four of them were caused by trauma and the rest by surgical procedures.

The lesions were stitched using identical techniques and similar suture thread. The researchers took photographs right after each wound was closed, a week later and six months after that. The study appears in the August issue of Mayo Clinic Proceedings.

Two facial surgeons unconnected with the study assessed the photographs without knowing which wounds had been treated with Botox and which with a placebo. They rated the final cosmetic outcomes on a 10-point scale.

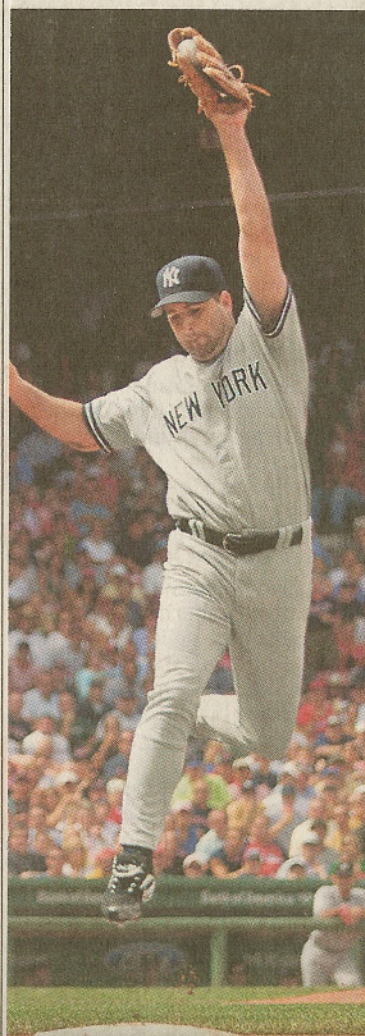
The average rating for the Botox group was 8.9, and for the placebo group, 7.2, a highly significant difference.



Illustrations by Stuart Bradford

Botox, or Botulinum toxin, is probably not needed for every facial wound. "This applies mainly to larger excisions," said Dr. Holger G. Gassner, the lead author of the study and now a fellow in facial plastic surgery at the University of Washington. "And it would certainly apply to traumatic wounds like car accidents and dog bites."

The authors recognize that a one-year follow-up may produce different results and that most of the wounds in the study were surgical incisions rather than accidental injuries. "For a hundred years we've been trying to reduce the effect of muscle pull on scarring," Dr. Gassner said. "Now we can eliminate it."



C. J. Gunther/European Pressphoto Agency
ston scoreless for six innings.

IN ELECTION PUSH, BUSH FAULTS TALK OF IRAQ PULLOUT

CRITICIZES THE DEMOCRATS

Says Rivals Fail to Grasp
Threat, and Cites Strain
on Nation's Psyche

By JIM RUTENBERG

WASHINGTON, Aug. 21 — President Bush seized on Monday on Democratic calls for withdrawal from Iraq to make an election-year case that his political rivals did not properly understand the threats to the nation and would create a more dangerous world.

It was the most direct attack on Democrats that Mr. Bush has made from a White House lectern this election year, and it effectively signaled the beginning of a more outright political season for him and his aides as they work to help Republicans maintain control of Congress.

The appearance offered a preview of the themes the White House and Republicans will use this fall during their most daunting electoral chal-



Doug Mills/The New York Times

President Bush taking a question at a news conference yesterday.

Officials Seek Broader Access To Airline Data

By ERIC LIPTON

WASHINGTON, Aug. 21 — United States and European authorities,

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