

# Super-drug Botox adds new wrinkle to treatment

IT'S already a well-known weapon against wrinkles. And now, doctors are calling the poison Botox one of the most important drugs of the century.

The diluted toxin, which is injected into face, neck and eye muscles to remove lines, is now being used as a treatment for more than 44 other conditions — including sweating, migraines and movement disorders.

"There are certain drugs like penicillin that become legends, and Botox will be one of them," predicts Dr. William Binder, associate professor at the UCLA School of Medicine.

By HALLIE LEVINE

One person who's life has been transformed by the drug is Anthony Giordinao, a 31-year-old Staten Island law-firm billing supervisor.

He, along with 20 million other Americans, suffers from hyperhidrosis, a humiliating medical condition that causes excessive sweating from the brows, palms and armpits.

"I swear by this drug," says Giordinao, who had the toxin injected into his armpits and palms a year ago.

"Before, I'd drench a shirt in 15 minutes. I shied away from shaking hands with business associates. Even if it were 100 degrees or zero degrees, I'd still sweat."

Botox paralyzes the nerve signal to the sweat glands, thus preventing perspiration from occurring. It lasts between six months and a year, but having both underarms treated costs around \$750 and the palms are a whopping \$1,000.

But those who have braved Botox say it's worth every penny.

"It's saved me from being a social pariah," says one 30-year-old, female Manhattan trader who requested anonymity.

"I've had this problem of excessive sweating since sixth grade. I grew up in Florida and spent most of my teenage years taping Kleenex under the arms of my Polo shirts and sewing in guard patches under my gymnastics leotards.

"But now I'm in such a high-stress, high-pressure environment where I'm socially interacting with people at all time. I constantly had to cover myself with blazers so potential clients wouldn't see the sweat stains under my armpits. Now I can wear silk blouses and relax."

**B**OTOX has also been adopted by neurologists as a valuable weapon against migraines.

The discovery came quite by accident — after patients being injected with Botox to remove wrinkles in their foreheads found it relieved their headaches, too.

"I was injecting a lot of foreheads, and patients were coming

back with no headaches," Binder says. "It took two years of careful research before I believed it myself."

Now, he's just released a study that shows 60 percent of his migraine patients experience total relief of symptoms for an average of three to five months. Thirty percent had partial relief of at least 50 percent — which means their migraines were cut in half both in number and severity.

"Nobody really understands how Botox works to relieve headaches," acknowledges Dr. Richard Lipton, professor of neurology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in The Bronx.

"One theory is that it blocks the effects of the pain-carrying fibers of the nervous system which trigger migraines."

But doctors stress the jury is still out on Botox's effectiveness.

"It's premature to recommend Botox for all migraine sufferers," says Dr. Stewart Tepper, director of the New England Center for Headache in Stamford, Conn. "There have been some studies where Botox didn't seem to work."

He admits the problem may be that neurologists are not injecting Botox into the most effective place.

Lori Withall, a 43-year-old police officer from Wilton, Conn., suffered from blinding headaches from the age of 10. But over the past few years they had been getting worse.

"They were occurring more frequently and getting longer — two years ago I had one that lasted 14 days," she says.

But since Withall enrolled in a study at Dr. Tepper's clinic a year ago, her debilitating migraines have stopped.

Now, Withall undergoes a set of Botox injections — "14 tiny pinpricks, which barely hurt at all,"



she says — every three months. Because her insurance doesn't cover the experimental procedure, she pays the \$400 fee out of pocket.

"It irritates me because if I didn't take the shots, my insurance would be paying more than that for my migraine medication," she fumes. "But the money's worth it for me so I can avoid these headaches."

**D**OCTORS are also studying Botox to treat everything from multiple sclerosis to facial