

# Light years ahead

A new light-based product promises painfree and safe treatment for skin rejuvenation and hair, pigment and acne removal. **NGIAM YING LAN** finds out more

**F**ANCY taking 10 years off your face with a fuss-free, painless procedure that takes all of five minutes? Or acquiring that smooth, permanently hairless back in just 20 minutes? Zip into a medical clinic during lunch break and saunter out in record time with noticeably tighter, smoother and blemish-free skin — that's what Photopneumatic Therapy (PPX) can do, says Aesthera Corporation's co-founder and chief technical officer, Robert S Anderson, who was in town last weekend.

"Its biggest advantage is in treating large areas, like a woman's legs," says Dr Anderson of the California-based company's latest innovation. "With the traditional Intense Pulse Light (IPL), it might take two hours for a hair removal session. Using PPX, we could do two legs in about 12 minutes.

"Similarly, it would take us just 14 minutes to do a person's back, compared to IPL, which takes two hours. It's a much faster product, especially when you treat large areas of the skin."

This light-based treatment, he claims, is a breakthrough for its painless and side-effect-free treatment in four main areas: skin and hair rejuvenation, pigmentation and acne removal.

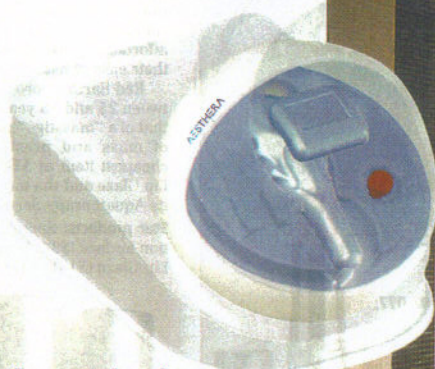
"A vacuum is used to stretch and modify

the skin, changing its optical characteristics. What we're doing is, essentially, pulling the target — such as a strand of hair or a leg vein — right up to the surface momentarily, and it's during this moment that we flash the light out, destroying it," explains the 60-year-old laser physicist turned-entrepreneur.

And unlike a typical IPL session, where patients have to apply a topical anaesthetic, such as Elamax, one hour ahead of time, PPX won't require any such "pre-treatment", notes Dr Anderson. "It's basically come on in, sit down and I will treat. From the time you arrive at the clinic till you leave, it can take no more than 15 minutes."

And if you half expect to be seriously intimidated by a hulking contraption after treading into the treatment room — prepare to be disappointed or, in this case, pleasantly surprised. The equipment of choice here is lightweight at 15.9kg, portable, and slightly futuristic looking — basically, it looks like a mini blue-white globe mounted on an uneven platform (inadvertently invoking countless Star Trek-related jokes).

Attached to the system is a handpiece, on which disposable tips of various sizes can be fitted. Herein lies the benefit, says Dr Anderson, because each tip, which comes into contact with the problem area (ie. your skin), is designed to be single-use per patient. "This is unlike IPL, where the equipment may have



**Cutting edge:** Check out the space-age PPX treatment at the equally space-age Sloane Clinic

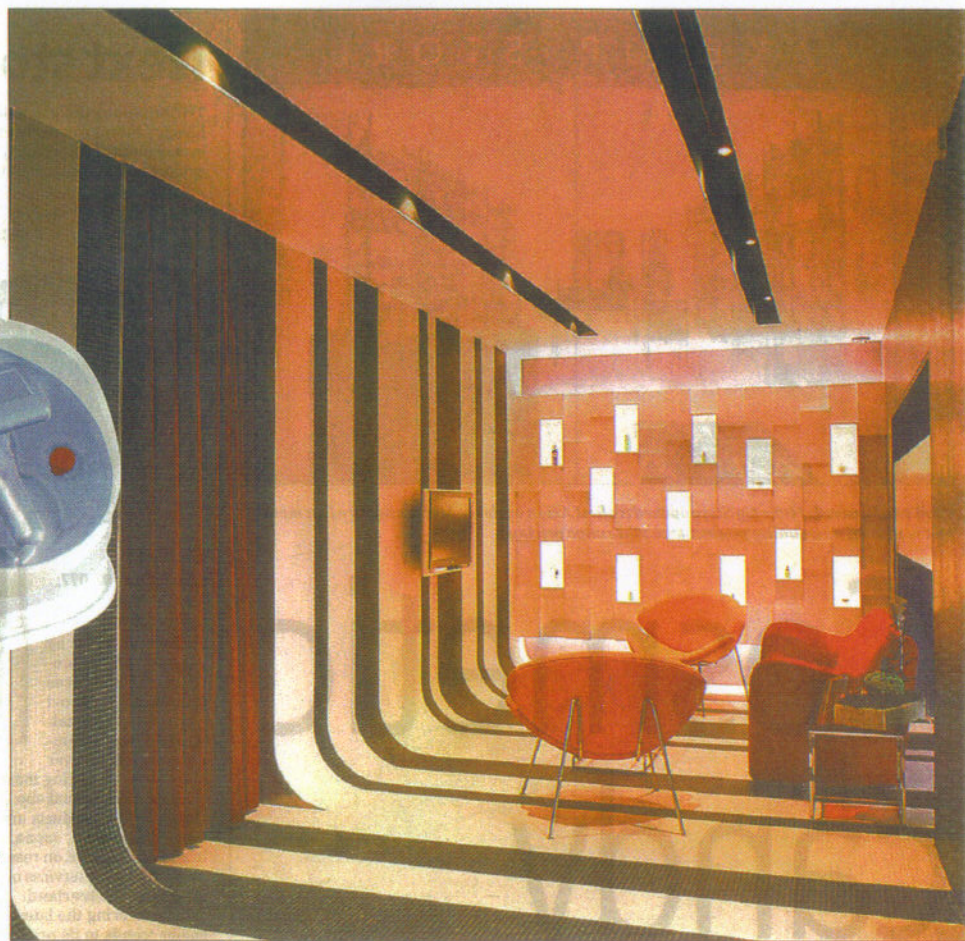
been used to treat someone else half an hour before you begin treatment, and you have no idea where they treated him," he adds.

Fussier patients might suspiciously enquire as to whether one needs to fulfill a certain number of sessions before seeing visible results — PPX goes some way into putting these hair-raising concerns to rest.

For skin rejuvenation, Dr Anderson says, it takes just one session to see results, though doctors will usually advise patients to go for at least three sessions. Ditto for acne, but if your skin flares up again in two to three months' time, you might want to consider whipping out that appointment book.

Hair removal, he says, is virtually instant, and will not leave you with the red marks, blemishes and intermittent hair loss that plague recipients of certain other techniques.

When asked if any celebrities have been spotted raving about this new technology, he shakes his head, saying: "Everybody all over the world is just getting started."



Aesthera — which develops and manufactures the product used in PPX — just received approval from the US Food And Drug Administration (FDA) in late April this year. It started shipping 20 to 25 units — the first to come out of manufacturing — in June, and at least one has reached local shores.

The Sloane Clinic's 1,200 sq ft Chip Bee Gradients branch, otherwise known as VillageSpace, is where it's at, and Dr Kenneth Lee — one half of the husband-and-wife team who founded the place — revealed that it cost them about \$70,000 to bring a single unit in.

Since treatments began last week, 15 people — relatives and friends notwithstanding — have gone under the light, so to speak, and the general reception is encouraging. Mr Lee says: "Everyone felt that PPX is painless and very much faster. They also find this more convenient, because you don't have to come down 45 minutes earlier to apply anaesthesia. You also won't have to experience the sensation of a rubber band snapping on the face.

which is what IPL feels like, or even lie down, as PPX can take all of five minutes."

And because it consumes significantly less energy than IPL, this translates into reduced costs for patients.

An IPL session at VillageSpace starts from \$600, but for PPX, if you are going for hair removal on a small area (ie. the underarms), it would only cost \$200. Skin rejuvenation starts from \$600, as do acne and pigmentation removal. But costs may vary, says Mr Lee, depending on the size of the problem area.

As of now, VillageSpace may be the only clinic in Singapore (and South-east Asia) to offer these treatments, but with all its potential, its no wonder then that the affable 35-year-old physician who runs it says that in two to three months' time, he expects others to follow suit.

PPX Treatments are available at VillageSpace, 43 Jalan Merah #01-66, Chip Bee Gardens (S 278115) Tel: 6471 1108