

David J. Goldberg, MD, Judith Regan Tonight Show on The Fox News Channel Interview 9/14/02

Judith: Every day millions of Americans are bombarded with magazine covers of the perfect-looking woman, a slim, tall model with perfect skin: no wrinkles or unwanted hair anywhere. Some of it, as we all know, has been airbrushed away. So why can't we airbrush away our stretch marks, tattoos, crow's feet, discoloration, and scars? Well, maybe we can. And maybe it's affordable. But who do you trust to perform tricky laser procedures? My next guest has been designated one of the top ten laser surgeons in the U.S. by Self magazine. He's currently Director of both Laser Research and Mohs Surgery at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, and if all that wasn't enough, he's also on the faculty of Fordham University School of Law. Joining us is doctor and lawyer David Goldberg. Welcome.

Dr. Goldberg: It's a pleasure to be here.

Judith: So your mother must be thrilled - doctor, lawyer.

Dr. Goldberg: She's pretty happy.

Judith: Look at my face. I'm an aging beauty. What would you do if I walked into your office?

Dr. Goldberg: Well, I think the approach now is to try to do things to slow down the aging process. Not so much take you and say, "Oh my, what can I do now" but "What can I do to prevent some of those things you don't want, like all those wrinkles." We have all of these so-called lunchtime procedures now that can make your skin look better, give you better quality, tone, and texture to your skin, really promote anti-aging, and yet no one knows you're doing anything.

Judith: What does it involve, and how much does it cost?

Dr. Goldberg: Well, there's usually a series of treatments. You have to go to a physician anywhere from 3-6 times. The sessions are done about 2-3 weeks apart. It's all of 5-10 minutes. The treatments can vary anywhere from \$300 up to \$1500 per treatment.

Judith: What does it actually do? Are there different kinds of lasers, and how do you know which one is right for your skin?

Dr. Goldberg: There are a variety of lasers. There is this idea out there that you go to the doctor and you have a laser procedure. In fact there are up to 30 different lasers now available. But these sorts of procedures include some lasers that promote quality of the skin. We have newer machines now that are laser-like devices which actually can pull the jowls a little bit, or can pull the eyebrows up a little bit without creating any kind of wound at all. What they do is, these newer machines (the technology is known as Thermage Thermacool TC) - what it does is actually create some heat in the deeper layers of the skin in the connections between the skin and the muscles. By tightening that, you are non-surgically creating a face-lift, if you will, or a brow-lift.

Judith: What's the downside?

Dr. Goldberg: The downside is going to the wrong doctor. The procedures are incredibly safe and incredibly non-invasive as long as they're done appropriately. If they're done appropriately there's no wound, there's no redness. You just see some gradual tightening of the skin.

Judith: If they're done inappropriately what happens? They turn it on too high, or they do the wrong thing for your skin? What is it?

Dr. Goldberg: You kind of alluded to it. It's not just turning it on too high and turning up the power. It's also picking the right people. Everybody's skin color is different. Everybody's skin is different. The downside if it's done inappropriately is scarring.

Judith: Is there some type of skin that shouldn't have laser?

Dr. Goldberg: It depends on what we're doing. We now have laser hair removal procedures for all skin types.

Judith: Does that work?

Dr. Goldberg: It works if you understand what it does. A lot of people want to come in and have laser hair removal done once and see no hair.

Judith: What's wrong with that?

Dr. Goldberg: That's a great idea.

Judith: I want to do that! Come on!

Dr. Goldberg: That's dip me in the box and poof! - it's gone! Nothing in life is really like that.

Judith: Absolutely! That's the American way. Come on!

Dr. Goldberg: It's the American way. You're absolutely correct. But it's a series of treatments also.

Judith: Does it hurt?

Dr. Goldberg: It feels like a rubber band. It's not terrible.

Judith: What happens? How does it work?

Dr. Goldberg: What happens is those lasers are absorbed by pigment in the hair, and the hair then transmits this heat down to the root of the hair. This either damages or destroys the roots of the hair.

Judith: Why do you need lots and lots of treatments?

Dr. Goldberg: Because hair has growing cycles, and at any given time some of the hair is in the growing cycle and some is not. And only in the growing cycle is the hair, which absorbs the light, connected to the roots, and we have to damage the roots. So we have to go through multiple treatments to eventually get all the hairs in the growing cycle.

Judith: And do you? Is it possible to get all the hairs?

Dr. Goldberg: It is possible. Most commonly there's still a little bit of hair left, but it's much finer, less dense, less dark. But occasionally there's none.

Judith: And that takes how many treatments normally?

Dr. Goldberg: Typically anywhere from 5-8 sessions done about 6 weeks apart.

Judith: What about discoloration, age spots, people who have scarring, things like that? Does that work with lasers?

Dr. Goldberg: Judith, we never call them age spots.

Judith: Why not?

Dr. Goldberg: We call them experience spots. The more experienced you are, the more you get. It sounds better. There is a laser for that as well. It's actually a very simple laser. That laser will destroy the pigment in those age spots or those liver spots, experience spots.

Judith: Liver spots sounds worse than age spots. Yuk!

Dr. Goldberg: Yeah, it sounds worse. They're sun related, of course, and they occur after years of sun exposure. Usually one or two sessions and they're significantly improved.

Judith: All right, how do you pick the right guy to go to, aside from calling you?

Dr. Goldberg: No, I'm not the only one. Basically what you want to find out is how much experience that laser physician has. By and large, dermatologists and plastic surgeons do the most laser work. The questions to ask the physician are: "How many of these procedures have you done? Let me speak to someone you've treated." If the doctor says, "No, I can't do that," then go the other way. Ask if the doctor rents or owns the machines he or she is using. There are many machines, and those centers that own their own machines have made the commitment to doing this every day. Those who rent machines usually don't do it every day, and lasers are much like computers. If they're rented, they're being brought on a van to the doctor's office, they're bouncing around in the van, and they'll never be as good as that computer that stays put.

Judith: But don't you have to ask about which machines they have as well, or does it not matter?

Dr. Goldberg: It certainly does matter. As I mentioned in terms of hair removal, there are machines that are used for dark skin versus lighter skin. Some patients are good candidates for these lunchtime laser procedures. Some are not. So you do have to ask the right questions in terms of the technology.

Judith: All right. Dr. David Goldberg from Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Thank you so much.

Dr. Goldberg: It's been my pleasure.