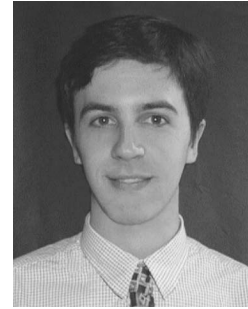


PREFACE



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Guest Editors

Although lasers have been in existence for over 4 decades, it has been only within the past several years that they have gained widespread public acceptance. Lasers have no doubt revolutionized the practice of dermatology, leading to innovative treatments for a host of skin conditions including vascular and pigmented birthmarks, tattoos, scars, rhytides, and unwanted hair.

Although laser-based cosmetic surgery has matured past its infancy in a remarkably short period of time, it is still in the throes of its adolescence. New laser technologies remain under development; clinical indications continue to be defined and expanded, and surgical techniques are being refined and disseminated. The limitations of laser-based surgical modalities are diminishing, but such limitations nonetheless exist. Most patients seeking dermatologic laser treatment are not only unaware of the inherent limitations of currently available medical lasers, but also tend to view these instruments as a modern form of wizardry—as devices that achieve effortless, near-instantaneous, and perfect aesthetic results. Such unrealistic expectations are partially the product of our modern industrial society's exaggerated faith in the power of technology to address any problem and of the depictions of cosmetic laser surgery in the popular media. The most effective, though not infallible, means available for counteracting unrealistic patient expectations is an ample and in-depth program of education. Physicians should thus not only be properly trained in the laser technique, but should also be well-versed in its potential side effects and complications in order to properly select and prepare patients for treatment.

To this end, this special issue on lasers has been carefully compiled to provide a discussion of the latest technologies, including appropriate laser selection and patient management by a group of laser practitioners renowned in the field. The advances seen in cutaneous laser surgery over the past 5 years following the publication of the first *Dermatologic Clinics* issue on lasers are in large part owing to their own investigations in the field. Through these studies, clinical results have been further optimized and postoperative morbidity reduced. My appreciation goes to my laser colleagues and others in this rapidly growing field who continue to expand our collective knowledge and who strive for delivery of compassionate patient care.

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