Laser-Powered Intimacy

Can pulses of light help restore function to a woman's private parts?

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When Vivian, age 57, noticed a stinging, burning sensation after sex with her husband, she chalked it up to having engaged in too many lovemaking sessions in one night and then promptly forgot about it. Then, the same thing happened again, several times in succession. Alarmed, Vivian booked an appointment with her gynecologist the next day.

At the start of the vaginal exam, Vivian felt excruciating pain. Like more than half of women undergoing menopause, she suffered from vaginal dryness, a.k.a. vulvovaginal atrophy. Later, she learned that the condition causes painful intercourse, or dyspareunia, and makes gynecological examinations extremely difficult to endure.

Vivian's doctor suggested she consider trying a new treatment for her symptoms that more ob/gyns across the country are currently offering. It's called MonaLisa Touch therapy, and physicians use it to address many of the problems that are triggered by menopause.

The MonaLisa treatment uses a fractional CO2 laser, a skin rejuvenation device that's also used to stimulate the production of collagen and increase blood flow to thinning vaginal tissues.

This helps revitalize the organ, explains Seattle-based Karny Jacoby, MD, a board-certified urologist with a subspecialty in female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery.

Preliminary observational information showed that some women with vaginal dryness benefited from this technology, according to The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG).

But the organization of women's health care physicians cautions that marketing claims saying the medical laser is "approved" or "cleared" by the FDA for the treatment of vulvovaginal atrophy aren't accurate.

The ACOG stresses that despite the potential usefulness of this currently uninsured treatment, the medical community needs more research and data to confirm the procedure's effectiveness, safety and long-term health benefits.

Jacoby contends, however, that "thousands of women have been successfully treated with this

therapy and are quite pleased with the results.”

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