

Smooth selling



The only guest who left this Upper East Side Botox party with wrinkles intact was this cute little pug, Roxy.

Rob Schoenbaum

By MARTICA K. HEANER

IAN Crawford steps up to go under the Botox needle as the other party guests swirl around, sipping Chardonnay and inspecting one another's forehead

"I'm doing this because of insane vanity," said Crawford, a 34-year-old hairstylist, aesthetician and aspiring pop singer.

"Plus, it may help my chances of breaking into the music business."

From New York to Los Angeles, men and women are flocking to new sip-nip-and-tuck affairs known as Botox parties.

Even in Britain, where natural ugliness is accepted as a birthright of the upper crust, Bolly (Bollinger champagne) and Botox events have replaced tea and crumpets.

Tuesday night's party on the Upper East Side was arranged by the publicist of Dr. Joseph Eviatar, an ophthalmic plastic surgeon based at Chelsea Eye Laser, Skin and Cosmetic Surgery Center.

Amy Koyiades, a 24-year-old executive assistant, sprung for her first forehead injection.

"I've started noticing lines and I squint a lot, so I've been thinking about trying it," she said, "although I'm worried about the financial obligations of keeping it up."

Each injection lasts three to six months. Party guests have to pay for the procedures, but receive a 20 percent discount off Eviatar's usual prices of \$550 for a forehead injection and \$450 to fix crow's feet.

"What we do here is exactly what we do in our office," Eviatar assures the guests.

"We're doing it in this casual setting so that you can come after work." Expect to get your own invitation to a Botox party soon, now that the Food and Drug Administration has approved the drug's use as a cosmetic treatment for vertical eyebrow wrinkles in men and women younger than 65.

Botox - a safe form of botulism - has been approved for more than 20 years as a treatment for neurological disorders.

But for the last 10 years, doctors have used it "off label" in cosmetic treatments as well.

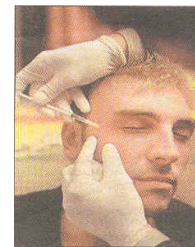
"The FDA approval positively helped me make up my mind," said John Bartola, 53, owner of a vintage-style apron company. "This procedure is like getting a haircut. At some point, you do what you need to do to look a little better."

As Eviatar held up a mirror during a pre-shot consultation, Bartola joked, "I want to look like Brad Pitt."

"Me, too," the doctor said. "We can diminish these lines, but these others are deep, so the most we can do is soften them so they're less furrowed."

Not everybody is thrilled about the parties. "Although Botox is the best thing since sliced bread and I've had it done six times, a quick fix at a party doesn't sit well with me," says Dr. Darrick Antell, a professor of plastic surgery at Columbia and spokesperson for the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

"When you move away from a medical environment, you risk not using sterile technique or keeping track of - and disposing of - the needles in the right way."



Hairstylist Ian Crawford goes under the needle.

And wine and champagne are not the usual pre-surgical prep. "Alcohol before any procedure is stupid because it can increase bleeding," says Dr. Harold Lancer, an L.A. cosmetic dermatologist.

(During his introductory talk, Eviatar advised the party-goers to enter sober and have a drink after the treatment, but several were already sipping.)

"There's very little that can go wrong," says Dr. Steven Pearlman, a New York spokesman for the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. "But do really want to trivialize a serious medical treatment by doing it in someone's living room?"