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DERMATOLOGY AND DERMATOLOGIC SURGERY

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Photodynamic Therapy for Actinic Keratosis

Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) is an FDA approved dermatologic treatment for removing actinic keratosis. This innovative therapy is a two-step process. First, the affected areas are treated with a topical solution called aminolevulinic acid (ALA or brand name Levulan Kerastick[®]). This medication is left on for approximately 60 minutes. Next the patient is exposed to a light known as the Blue-U for 15 minutes or treated by IPL (intense pulsed light) The Blue-U and the IPL are light emitting systems with a specific non-damaging wavelength that when combined with ALA destroys the precancerous cells. IPL has the added benefit of diminishing the effects of sun damaged skin.

This therapy requires multiple treatments which are performed every 4 weeks. Thus far the only reported side effects are minor stinging, burning, redness, swelling and/or itching which should subside within 48 hours. This treatment is not recommended for people who have sensitivity to blue light, porphyrias, or allergies to chemicals called porphyrins. It is also not recommended if you are pregnant or nursing.

Following the treatment, the skin around the lesions may appear slightly red. Some patients may also experience mild swelling. These changes should improve markedly within 48 hours, and should be completely resolved by 4 weeks after the treatment.

PDT patients must avoid exposure to direct sunlight or bright indoor light for a period of 48 hours after treatment. All patients treated with the Blue-U must wear sunscreen with an SPF 20 or above on the treated areas for at least 48 hours post-treatment. It is also recommended that you cover the treatment areas with protective clothing (e.g. a hat or scarf) and stay in the shade if possible.

This procedure is a highly successful, non-invasive treatment targeting inflammatory lesions and actinic keratosis.