

The doctor who gives Botox to his daughter

Dr Jules Nabet has a valuable research subject — his daughter has been a client since she was 18



Dr Jules Nabet and his daughter, Paola. Her first Botox injections were to help her deal with migraines

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I am sitting scrutinising a woman in her thirties who is in the unusual — one imagines unique — position of having had Botox injected into her face by her father every six months since the age of 18.

Scare stories would tell us that said individual might look rather odd: rigid-countenanced, with absurdly elevated eyebrows, and a prematurely haggard appearance, Mother Nature having long since slung her hook. In fact, I have rarely witnessed anyone more radiant: dewy skinned, with expressive features, and a jawline most of us can only dream of. “Your father’s?” I inquire. “Mine!” she asserts firmly. The unwrinkled forehead may be the work of Dr Jules Nabet, but the bone structure is all daughter Paola’s own.

This month is the 15th anniversary of Botox being approved for cosmetic use by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a move that is regarded as one of the biggest breakthroughs in anti-ageing techniques. The use of botulinum toxin type A to paralyse frown lines became a phenomenon first in America, then in the UK, and from there all over the world. Forecasts for the global Botox market claim that it will reach \$2.9 billion by 2018.

Yet the history of Botox’s aesthetic use has been a chequered one, involving an army of rictus-faced acolytes, Hollywood horror stories and reality television starlets content to remain expressionless from the age of 22. The result is that where — for many — Botox is an unremarkable part of their grooming regime, for others it remains associated with a static-faced demeanour that is not only unappealing, but ironically rather ageing.

Nabet, a cosmetic medicine expert who operates in London, Paris and Moscow, has been using the injectable for 19 years (British use having begun before the FDA’s blessing). Indeed, this genial Frenchman was the pioneer of “baby Botox” — lower dosages allowing facial movement.

More recently he has devised a “Botox pen” — a mini, motorised syringe holder that is less painful and more accurate in terms of amount than a traditional needle. It has put him at the forefront of the trend for aesthetic interventions, moving away from surgery towards so-called tweakments — speedy, short-term solutions that don’t involve the knife.

Moreover, Nabet has one extremely valuable piece of walking, talking research unavailable to other practitioners: Paola. Now, I know what you’re thinking, because I thought it too. Behold: Frankenstein’s daughter, a yes girl with daddy issues, frozen in time since childhood. Happily, nothing could be farther from the truth.



Paola Nabet was afraid of her friends' reactions to her having Botox
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Paola, 36, is a law professor at the University of Luxembourg, with a daughter of her own, and a face as mobile as her intellect. She embodies the changing face of Botox; once the preserve of plastic-faced ladies who lunch, now merely another lifestyle option open to professional men and women.

First things first: her father began injecting her for medical reasons. “I had a lot of headaches,” she tells me in her mellifluous French accent at his Kensington practice in London. “Big migraines, so my father proposed to make some Botox. I was wary because the injections scared me, and the treatment was not well known. But it was for medical purposes and I trusted my father, so if he told me, ‘It’s good for you,’ I believed him. And it worked instantly.”

Such was the stigma surrounding Botox that she didn't tell her friends. "I wasn't ashamed, but I was afraid of their reactions. A lot of people felt that, after you had it, you didn't have expression. A friend told me, 'I would never have Botox. Every woman I know who has it — it's not the same face.' I answered that I had Botox and she was very, very surprised. But that's because my father's method is light, he doesn't fix your face."

Paola continued to receive Botox every six months until she was 30, at which point she asked her father to inject for cosmetic purposes too. Does she tell her friends now? "Yes, yes I do. All my friends are between 30 and 40, so they've started to feel that they need something more than just creams to stay young. I tell them to do it."

Still, many of us would balk at the idea of doing anything to the face of an 18-year-old, not least for fear of creating body image issues. Did she witness any changes to her adolescent features? "No, not at all. Nobody seemed to notice that I'd had Botox, and I myself didn't notice. I was not very interested in my appearance. It was only medicine for me. I never thought about it in another way. If I'd asked for it for my appearance, perhaps my father would have refrained."

Would she encourage her three-year-old daughter to be injected at 18? "I'm not sure because my father is the best and I don't know whether he'll still be practising. But if he is, then definitely she can do it."

“ Nabet’s technique has been described as ‘pretty Botox’

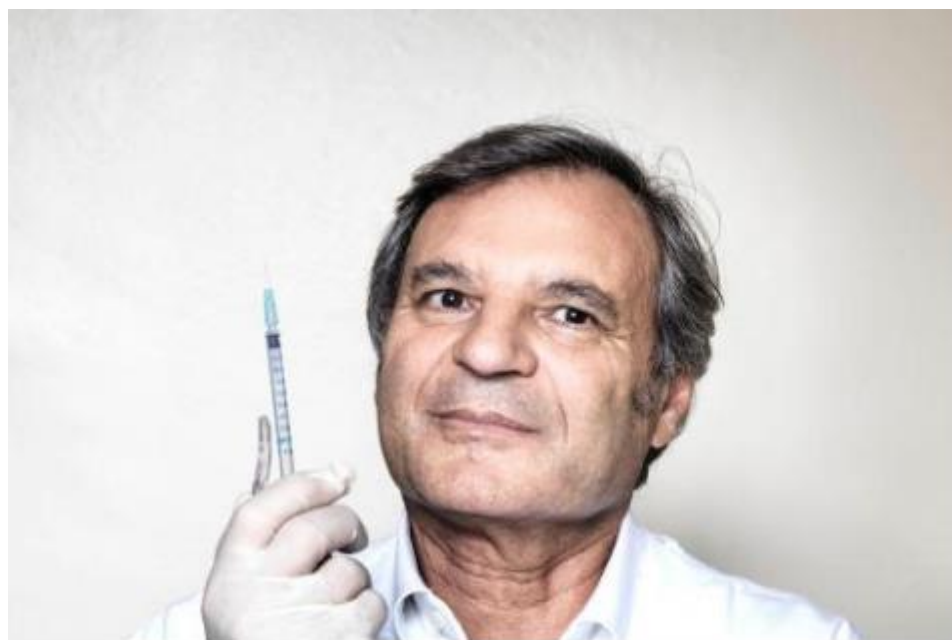
hasn’t had a top up for nine months, but shows no sign of wrinkle hysteria. Her father is a compact chap who describes himself as being “about 60” and looks good on it — positively James Bond-like when brandishing his famous Botox pen.

As he hovers over his daughter’s recumbent form, he tells me: “I inject the muscles differently for each person, as every face is different; eight to ten pricks high on the forehead, and around the eyes 1cm away, for example. The priority for my patients is to look natural; they want their lines softened, but they still want movement.”

For Nabet’s “thing” is that clients should emerge looking refreshed rather than rigid. “When my patients leave, people should say, ‘You look well,’ not, ‘What have you had done?’ ” he maintains. Net-a-Porter’s beauty director, Newby Hands, describes his technique as “pretty Botox” and many is the celebrity who comes to see him at his clinic at Kensington’s Royal Garden Hotel, then escapes via the secrecy of its underground car park; not least actors and models who make a living out of their “natural” good looks.

Having reassured myself that Nabet Jr is not being held hostage by a needle-wielding Nabet Sr, she and I head off for her next appointment. Paola

His daughter may have required only medical intervention, but he wouldn't refuse treatment to a teenager with wrinkles. "It depends on the face. Some women have frown lines at 18 or 19, others don't notice them until 40." His patients are aged 18 to 80, a fifth are men, 90 per cent English, and 60 to 70 per cent brought by word of mouth. Each gets the aforementioned tailored approach, established using blue dots created via a ruler. The results take three to five days to kick in, and a treatment costs £280 — a veritable bargain compared with other practitioners.



Jules Nabet: When my patients leave, people should say, "You look well," not, "What have you had done?"

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With a UK facelift costing anything from a few thousand pounds for a mini version to £10,000 for full face and neck, small wonder that such "tweakments" are doing a roaring trade.

According to the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, the number of people opting for cosmetic surgery has dropped by 40 per cent over the past year. Meanwhile, Nabet has a waiting list of at least a month for non-relatives, and sees clients late into the evening. While I'm watching him in action, a patient who missed her slot because of traffic is happy to wait a couple of hours until we're done.

Nabet acknowledges that the treatment is a crowd-pleaser. “Everyone who tries Botox will see an improvement in their lines and wrinkles. Your face will always look smoother after it.” If there were once any stigma, he sees no evidence of it now, certainly not compared with the perils and permanence of surgical solutions; bad Botox will look normal in weeks, a bad facelift possibly never.

As Paola sits up, unblemished and unbloodied by her run-in with her father’s power pen, he emits a satisfied sigh. “It’s not permanent, and far less drastic than surgery. There’s no anaesthetic and it’s safer, with a more natural look, and all completely biodegradable. It’s the biggest anti-ageing product of the past 20 years, and I think it will be around for ever. Everybody’s doing it, everybody’s speaking about it. Botox is the new normal.”

The new normal it may be for society at large. However, it’s the old normal for this father-daughter duo as they discuss the evening’s dinner arrangements, expressions as active as they are unsullied.

Appointments via julesnabet.com, or 020 7938 2195