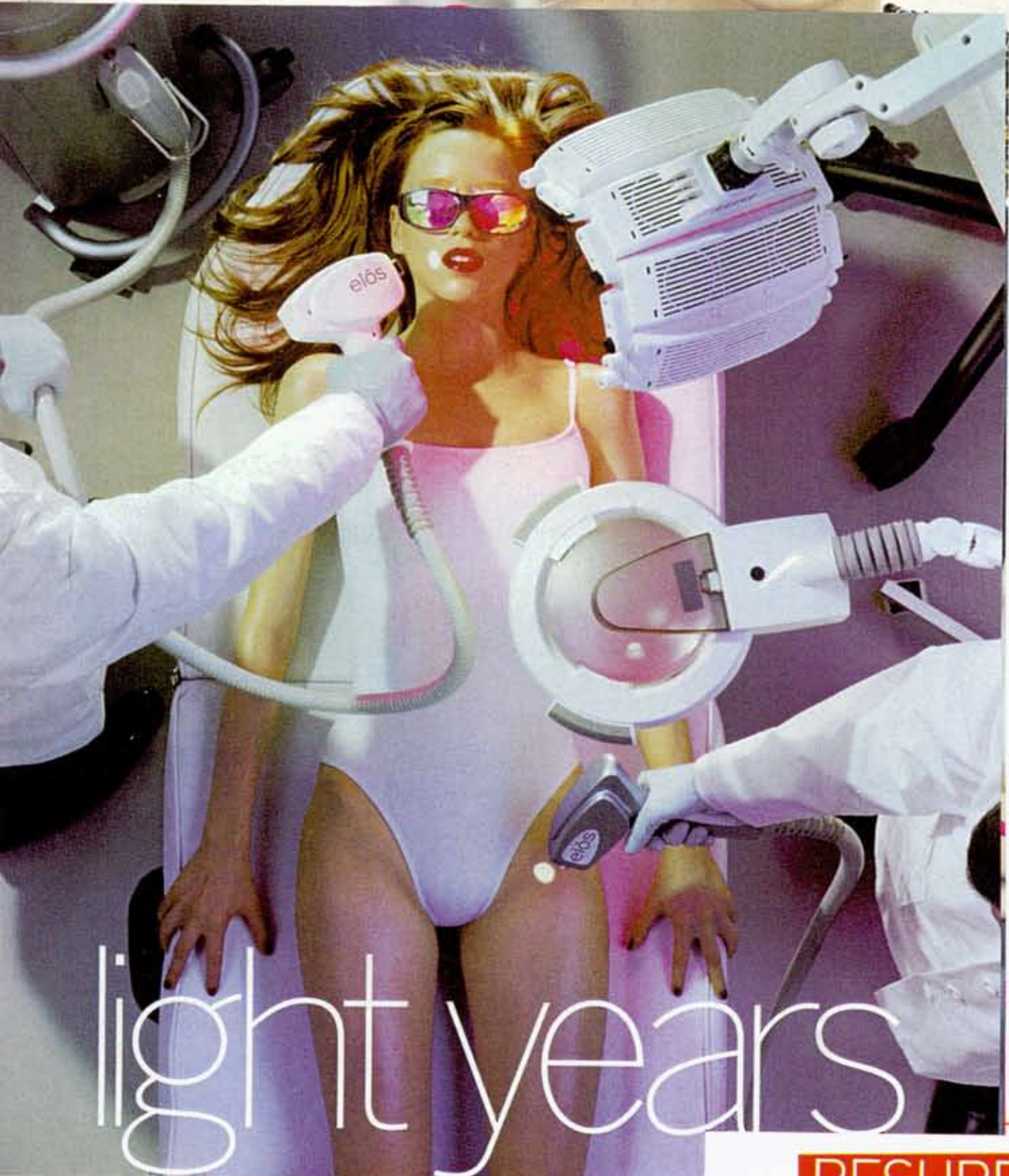


WOMEN

NOV

The Cost of Looking Good



When it started appearing in doctors' offices last year, tantalizing rumors circulated that five Fraxel sessions worked as well as one harrowing CO₂ treatment—and wouldn't leave you looking like the Bride of Frankenstein for a week. Enthusiasm has since cooled a bit. While Sadick remains a fan, he concedes that "the results in terms of wrinkle reduction have been a little disappointing." Rhoda Narins, M.D., president of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery, prefers the "home run" of the CO₂, especially since the advent of gentler, lower-energy techniques.

So why is there still so much fuss about Fraxel? What *is* it good for? Early fine lines, diffused pigmentation, and acne scarring. Most doctors consider it a very acceptable alternative to CO₂ resurfacing for treating darker complexions (which can permanently lose pigment during ablative procedures); for all skin types, it's a popular tool for delicate areas like the neck, chest, and hands.

The newest kids on the block are the Sciton and Portrait plasma devices. The former is a new generation of erbium laser (that trusted class of ablative devices known for being almost as effective, but not quite as wounding, as the CO₂). The latter uses high-energy nitrogen gas to heat and resurface the skin, leaving behind a paper-thin crust that acts as a protective dressing. "Once it falls off," says Dover, "you have fresh, beautiful skin underneath." Both the Sciton and Portrait tackle wrinkles, and both let patients decide just how aggressive they want to go. Lower-energy treatments might sideline you for only three days, but you'll need several sessions to equal the results of one high-energy round.

light years

RESURFACING, REVAMPED

The promise of Fraxel—

The laser and light-source landscape now includes truly effective fixes for almost every imperfection—from sun spots to stretch marks. By Cara Birnbaum.

Assuming you opt for more juice, notes Tina Alster, M.D., of the Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery in Washington, D.C., these machines do more than the Fraxel, treatment for treatment. But they come with a

week of recovery time, which is why "my patients *all* prefer Fraxel," she says.

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