



TOP BEAUTY EXPERT, AUSTRIA

Improving the life of patients suffering from long-term neuropathic pain conditions

Next to head and back pain, neuropathic pain is among the most common chronic disease and occurs after damage to the nerve structures. Vienna-based Dr. Brigitta Balogh is not only specialised in aesthetic and reconstructive surgery, but also in treating severe pain conditions that are the result of nerve damage.

TEXT: JESSICA HOLZHAUSEN | PHOTOS: UNIV.-DOZ. DR. BRIGITTA BALOGH

In Germany alone about five million people, around six per cent of the population, suffer from neuropathic pain. Often enough, neuropathic pain is not diagnosed correctly and many patients visit many doctors until they finally get the right treatment and therapy in a specialist clinic. Neuropathic pain can occur to the central and peripheral nerve system. Patients suffer from spontaneous pain attacks, disabling sensitivity disturbances or even loss of sensitivity.

Since the symptoms are very diverse, a diagnosis is never easy. Therefore, Dr. Brigitta Balogh, a specialist for aesthetic, plastic and reconstructive surgery, only plans the necessary treatment after a neurologist and pain therapist have made various tests to determine the exact cause and lo-

cation of the pain. "A high-resolution ultrasound shows even the delicate nerves and can identify the exact location of a lesion," says Dr. Balogh about one aspect of the diagnosis.

A method to treat neuropathic pain is through medication, which reduces the pain and increases a patient's life to a certain degree. But above that, other forms of therapy are useful like transcutaneous electrical stimulation of nerves (TENS) or ergotherapy. Dr. Balogh offers specialised operations that not only lighten the symptoms, but focus on the cause. "With most of my patients, the pain is the result of accidents or operations when a nerve has fused with surrounding scar tissue or has been accidentally transected," explains Dr. Balogh.

A neurolysis means removing scar tissue that puts pressure on a nerve and thus causes the described pain. Using micro-instruments and the operation microscope, it is even possible to suture injured nerves and treat painful neuromas. Botox today is known for its use in aesthetic medicine, but is effective in some pain treatments: "Botox can be used for treating Sudeck's dystrophy or certain forms of migraine," says Dr. Balogh. Sudeck's dystrophy is also a long-term pain condition. In the end, a multilevel approach is most likely needed to treat neuropathic pain.

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