

Shop for shoes, get a Botox shot

In the US, medical spas are moving into malls to reach more customers

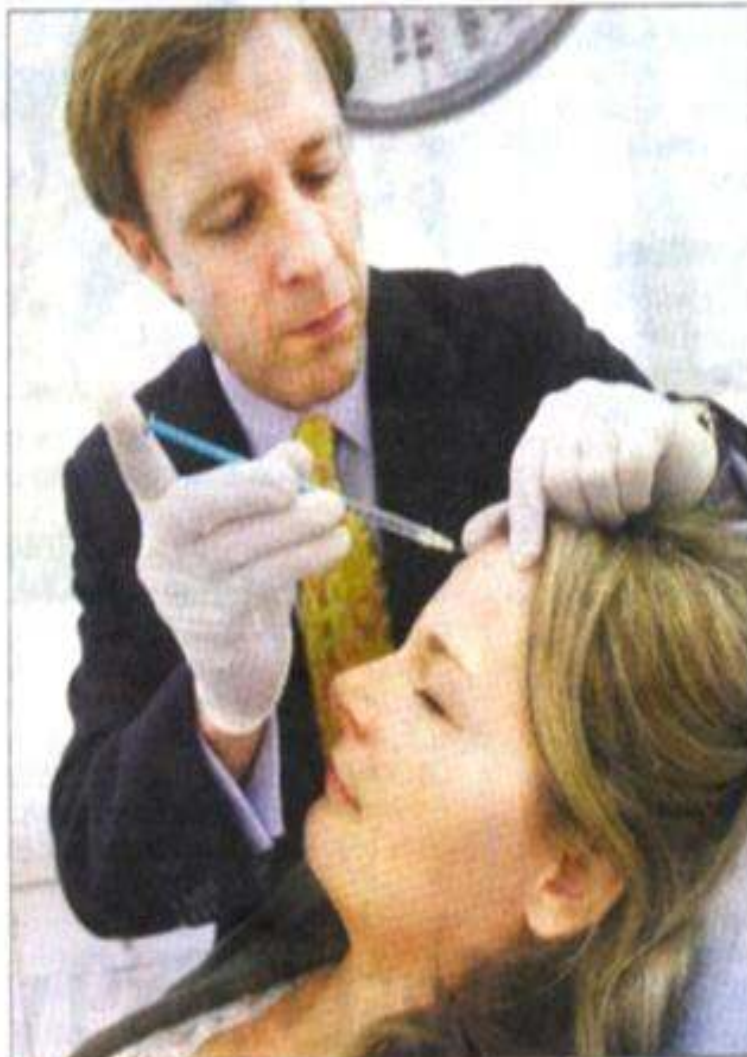
Jamie Stengle, Dallas

Amy Andrade had been thinking about Botox for a while. So when she spotted a spa like "cosmedical" clinic in the upscale Dallas mall she visits about once a month, she was immediately interested.

When she learned the clinic was connected with one of Texas' leading medical institutions, she was sold. She had Botox injected into her 32 year old forehead and near her eyes to smooth out infinitesimal wrinkles.

"It was great. I felt like I was getting a facial," Andrade said.

Medical spas like the one at Dallas' NorthPark Centre are booming. The number in the United States has jumped from 50 in 2002, when Botox injections won federal approval, to about 2,500 this year, the International Medical Spa Association says. Malls and other retail sites are the hot loca-



■ Dr Jeffrey M Kenkel gives patient Amy Andrade a Botox treatment at his office in Northpark Mall, Dallas - AP

tions as companies and medical institutions move closer to their customers.

Such spas offer minimally invasive cosmetic procedures like Botox injections which relaxes facial muscles to make lines fade, and

fillers like Restylane, which add volume.

Not all medical spas have ties with a major medical institution like the Klinger Advanced Aesthetics Cosmedical Centre, Spa and Salon at NorthPark, which has

teamed up with the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

Some "cosmedical" clinics don't even require their practitioners to be plastic surgeons or dermatologists.

Those who specialise in the field say involvement by a plastic surgeon or dermatologist ensures consumer safety. Dr Rod Rohrich, professor of the department of plastic surgery at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Centre, said: "When you peel back 'Botox in the mall,' you have a top notch medical facility in a mall setting," he said.

"What you're doing is you're getting the best of the best in a place where people shop and you're doing it safely." The doctors are generally there just half a day a week. Benjamin Akande, dean of Webster University School of Business and Technology in St Louis, said that it's a business decision that makes sense. "The partnership with these legitimate entities gives them the kind of credibility that cannot be questioned," Akande said. "This is as good or better as you coming to your local plastic surgeon." - AP