

Remembering the Baron of Botox, Fredric Brandt

Fredric Brandt championed the use of botox in its early days. His recent death is a blow to the cosmetics industry – so what is left of his legacy? *Aesthetic Dentistry Today* looks back

If you had Googled Dr Fredric Brandt's name three months ago, you would have stumbled across hundreds of articles heralding Dr Brandt as a 'magician', a 'wizard' and 'a studious clinician'.

Some articles may have questioned the morality of cosmetic injectables or even the sanity of some of Dr Brandt's practices, but they would never have questioned his unflinching passion for the cosmetics industry.

Sadly, on 5 April this year, Dr Brandt hanged himself in his Miami home.

Those articles were soon replaced with obituaries and think-pieces on why a man with so many friends, famous clients, medical prestige and personality was driven to suicide.

Early years

Dermatologist 'to the stars' Dr Brandt made his name in Hollywood in the early nineties. He treated (mostly) women from all over the world, and would eventually befriend A-list clients such as Madonna and US talk show host Kelly Ripa, both of whom publically lauded Dr Brandt and his work. It wasn't long before Dr Brandt became the world's biggest cosmetic user of Botox.

Dr Brandt was born in 1949 and grew up in Newark, New Jersey (throughout his career he would face repeated comments that he looked Scandinavian). His parents owned a sweet shop – in theory, the ideal backdrop for a doctor who would later campaign about the dangers of sugar. The truth is a lot darker: when Dr Brandt was just 15, his father died of juvenile diabetes, and his mother followed seven years later – just as he was starting medical school.

Despite these early grievances, Dr Brandt forged ahead. He graduated from Rutgers University in New Brunswick, USA in 1971, and soon after joined Hahnemann Medical College in Philadelphia, where he explored various specialities before settling on dermatology. 'I loved oncology, I loved nephrology, I loved hematology and cardiology,' he later told *The New York Times* (2014).

Dr Brandt eventually set up a private practice in Miami and then New York in the late nineties – a little closer to home. For the rest of his life, he would split his time between the two practices, and in 2006 he set up the Dermatology Research Institute at his Miami practice. This institute became a focal point for Dr Brandt's clinical studies, which would soon secure his name at the forefront of the cosmetics industry.

Baron of Botox

Once nicknamed the 'Baron of Botox' by *W Magazine*, Dr Brandt was as well-known for his medical practices as he was for his unique appearance. His fierce determination to stay on top of industry knowledge meant he often experimented with fillers on himself. His sleek, peroxide blonde hair, high cheekbones and plump lips made him distinctive – even in Hollywood.

And yet, despite his self-experimentation all in the name of cosmetic advancement, friends became worried.

Towards the end of last year, Dr Brandt's friend Elizabeth Hayt reportedly visited Dr Brandt's New York apartment, where she discovered a pile of syringes and needles and 'blood-stained gauze pads' in the bathroom. She told *The New York Times* that the picture was 'disturbing' (Bernstein, 2015).

Of it, she says: 'I thought, "Oh, Fred, this isn't a good thing to be doing alone on a Saturday night," referring to his use of fillers.'

Soon, it became impossible for Dr Brandt not to be recognised.

But he didn't shy away from the fame; he often attended celebrity parties and even had his own radio show on Siriusxm. He had a publicist, provided discount treatments to celebrities, and published two books on beauty: *Age-less: The Definitive Guide to Botox, Collagen, Lasers, Peels, and Other Solutions for Flawless Skin* (2002) and *10 Minutes/10 Years: Your Definitive Guide to a Beautiful and Youthful Appearance* (2007).

However, despite the fame and the



Dr Fredric Brandt

eccentricities, he took the public's opinion of him to heart, and was often chastised by the media.

No one can say whether or not this had a profound effect on his health, but it may not have helped. Joan Kron, contributing editor of *Allure*, said he was 'very hurt' by comments about his face, and admitted in his last weeks he was upset by about a cartoonish character played on the Netflix series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, which was largely believed to be based on him (Kron, 2015).

Jacque Tractenberg, Dr Brandt's publicist of 20 years, told the *Miami Herald*: 'He did not commit suicide because of the show. The show didn't help. It was mean. He felt bullied. It was mean-spirited picking at the way he looked for no reason at all. He suffered from depression before that.' (2015)

Kyle White, friend and colourist at Oscar Blandi Salon in New York City, once told *The New York Times* that Dr Brandt never managed to develop that 'hard shell' that is so often needed in the spotlight.

'He was like a gauze,' says Kyle in the same article. 'That was one of the things that made him so wonderful and it was also part of his

undoing. People can be cruel.'

And yet despite the ridicule, Dr Brandt had a lot of admirers.

In an article written by Jane Holzer and Stephanie Seymour Brant for *Interview Magazine* this year, they say: 'He has changed the fundamental concepts of beauty preservation and restoration and has rescued many patients from the permanent and unpredictable results of plastic surgery.'

His kindness and humility was never overlooked – Madonna reportedly told *The New York Times* that 'if I have nice skin, I owe a lot to him' (2014).

Legacy

Speaking to *The New York Times*, Dr Brandt remarked that his goal was to 'restore a face to humanity' (2014). 'I approach each face with a visual perception, an artistic preparation and a medical perception,' he says.

His legacy remains ripe. He was one of the first in the US to use Botox as a cosmetic treatment, having petitioned the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) during clinical trials, leading up to its approval in 2002 (*The Independent*, 2015).

His line of skincare products still remains widely used thanks to his extensive research and innovative procedures. The collection contains key anti-ageing botanicals such as green tea, white tea, and grapeseed extract.

Dr Brandt remained at the forefront of research and diagnosis throughout his career. He regularly attended meetings, published numerous professional papers, conducted in-depth industry-wide research programmes, and still found the time to see more than



40 patients a day at his two practices. His dedication to the field and expertise in non-surgical facial rejuvenation will always be remarkable.

'Dr Brandt is a very special individual: not only can he fix your laugh lines, but he can also give you them,' said Holzer and Brant in *Interview Magazine*.

His impact is far-reaching. London-based aesthetic dentist Dr Uchenna Okoye told us: 'Dr Brandt was a pioneer in the use of botox

and fillers. His techniques and ideas are still at the forefront of how we deliver aesthetic treatments today. He was passionate; a man that loved what he did, his work, his patients, and making a difference. I was so sad to hear of his passing, but he leaves behind a legacy in the many clinicians and patients he helped.'

One thing is certain: Dr Brandt will be sadly missed. Hollywood has lost a great friend, doctor, and pioneer.

Care to comment? @AesDenToday

References

- Bernstein J (2015) Behind the death of Dr Fredric Brandt, Cosmetic Dermatologist to the stars. *The New York Times* [online]. Available at <<http://nyti.ms/1Rue7bz>> [Accessed 15/05/15]
- Cohen H (2015) Celebrity skin doctor Fredric Brandt takes his own life at Miami home. *Miami Herald* [online]. Available at <<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/obituaries/article17488187.html>> [Accessed 15/05/15]
- Holzer J, Brant SS (2015) Dr Fredric Brandt. *Interview Magazine* [online]. Available at <<http://www.interviewmagazine.com/fashion/dr-fredric-brandt/>> [Accessed 15/05/15]
- Kron J (2015) Dermatologist Fredric Brandt has died: in memoriam. *Allure* [online]. Available at <<http://on.allure.com/19YmwBZ>> [Accessed 15/05/15]
- Trebay G (2014) The Man Behind the Face. *The New York Times* [online]. Available at <<http://nyti.ms/1i6JZ2u>> [Accessed 15/05/15]
- Williamson M (2015) Fredric Brandt: Dermatologist known as the 'King of Collagen', who was one of the first and most enthusiastic proponents of Botox. *The Independent* [online]. Available at <<http://ind.pn/1dWL01d>> [Accessed 15/05/15]



Cosmetic Courses

Teaching in medical aesthetics

The UK's most established provider of medical based aesthetic and skin rejuvenation training for dentists.



UK EXCLUSIVE SEMINAR...Facial Rejuvenation using Platelet Rich Plasma Therapy with Fat Transfer

We are pleased to invite you to our UK exclusive lecture by Professor Guy Magalon - world renowned speaker and leading voice in Fat Transfer, along with his son, Jacques Magalon an expert cell biologist in the area of Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) Therapy.

This is a unique opportunity to discuss and learn first-hand the realities behind two of the fastest growing procedures in the cosmetic market place today.

There will also be a specialist talk on the innovative Puregraft system of Fat Transfer which for the first time, enables this procedure to be brought into a clinic environment.

Price: £250 + VAT

When: Saturday 30th May 2015
9.30am - 4.30pm

Where: Royal Society of Medicine, Wimpole Street

Information: 01844 390110 or
ask@cosmeticcourses.co.uk
cosmeticcourses.co.uk



Birmingham | Buckinghamshire | Kent | Leeds | London | Manchester