

# MAKING A *Mark*

**Micropigmentation or semi-permanent make-up has firmly established itself as a medical aesthetics speciality in recent years, with many clinics incorporating it into the treatment menus for both beauty and medical applications. We look at how the industry has evolved and speak to some of its key players...**

Micropigmentation or semi-permanent make-up, as it is otherwise known, used to be considered as being purely in the domain of the beauty industry, but in the last decade it has firmly established itself as being part of the medical aesthetics genre by offering treatments that not only compliment anti-ageing procedures but also by working hand in hand with the plastic reconstructive industry in the fields of cancer and burns.

**S**emi-permanent make-up is a form of temporary cosmetic tattooing which uses very fine needles to place pigments under the skin. It can be used to create long-lasting eyeliner and lip colour as well as being able to shape and contour eyebrows and re-create nipples, lost during breast cancer surgery.

The term 'micropigmentation' was originally coined to distinguish semi-permanent make-up from tattooing as it uses 'micropigments' that are injected into the skin at a far more superficial level than with body art tattooing.

The industry has been fighting an uphill battle against perceptions of heavy, drawn on, 'McDonalds' arch eyebrows and thick Playboy style lip liners done in one block of colour, which dominated the looks of the 90s. However since then, not only have techniques been refined,

but a wider selection of pigments has also been developed so that technicians can create ultra natural looks.

Leading semi-permanent make-up artists Karen Betts remembers, "When I first started it was blocked brows, ugly 90s lip liner, that wasn't blended into the lip at all and heavy eyeliners. When I trained in the States I got shown how to do a brow and you just coloured it all in, just like a colouring book. But people were just grateful to have brows at that time as there was nothing else around. It was just classed as tattooing, but then people like myself and Debra Robson Lawrence thought to ourselves 'right we want to make things look more natural' and that's when I started looking at the growth of natural eyebrows and we started doing the 3D hair strokes. We can now make the hair strokes look so so natural that you can't even tell that anything has been done.

We use really fine needles to create these fine hair strokes, not like the thicker needles we used to use. Semi-permanent make-up shouldn't be noticed it should always be soft and natural. The industry has come a long way from when we first started 15 years ago."

## BEAUTY AND ANTI-AGEING

Semi-permanent make-up has its roots in the purely cosmetic side of the beauty industry, finding a market with women who wanted to have make-up that really lasted. Even the most flawless of cosmetics can run and rub off over the course of the day so semi-permanent make-up proved to be an ideal solution for busy women on the go who want to look their best. As the industry has developed the anti-ageing benefits of permanent cosmetics have also become clearer - eye brows can be lifted without the need for surgery or the results of botulinum toxin can be enhanced by creating a better shape to the brow; lips can be made to look fuller and given a more defined shape without fillers or to enhance the results of fillers and eyes can be made to look fresher and younger with a touch of eyeliner. All of these things make it fit in perfectly in the medical aesthetics environment and work in synergy with other forms of non-surgical cosmetic enhancement, and, as such, more and more aesthetic clinics are offering it on their treatment menus.

Top technician Tracie Giles says, "I certainly see permanent make-up sitting in the arena of cosmetic beauty/aesthetic medicine. I feel that it should be grouped together with the Botox® and

dermal fillers market, especially because of the other side we do which is more restorative. I don't like seeing these treatments done in a beauty salon somewhere, I think it needs to be much more strongly legislated and performed at more defined locations. I think people should be able to know they are going to a specialist semi-permanent make-up place rather than in a beauty salon or hairdressers, I just don't think it fits. I think down the line that is how the industry should go."



Semi-permanent make-up artist Annalisa Phillips at work

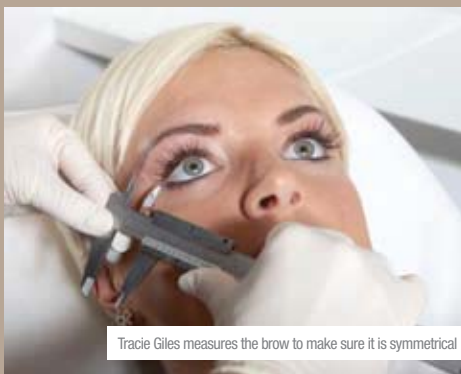
Annalisa Phillips runs semi-permanent make-up clinics at the Riverbanks Clinic, owned by Dr Ravi Jain, and has found it to be popular with his clients. She said, "I have been working with Dr Jain at the Riverbanks Clinic over the last year and have found that semi-permanent make-up treatments sit well with aesthetic treatments. Eyebrows are one of the most popular treatments we do. The

tail of the eyebrow can fall as the skin ages, often making the patient appear tired. By repositioning the tail of the brow to its original higher position the eye appears more open. Individual hair stroke simulation can blend seamlessly with the natural brow to ensure the lifted tail is not obviously unnatural. This process sits particularly well along side the Madonna lift performed by Dr Jain and is a common finishing touch to this treatment. Also flat or horizontal eyebrows are often requested to be reshaped to a feminine, arched brow through the use of Botox® and this effect can be enhanced by semi-permanent make up by adding colour and definition to the new arched shape. In the lip area semi-permanent make-up can be used to in conjunction with filler to give a more defined lip line and the impression of a fuller lip. Specific shading techniques can also be used to emphasis the cupid's bow and correct pigment selection can ensure that the natural lip is defined without the appearance of wearing lip color."



Before and after full face semi-permanent make-up (pictures courtesy of Annalisa Phillips)

Tracie adds, "This is not just to make you look better this is also an anti-ageing treatment - the eyebrows are lifted, the eyes look more awake, their lips look fuller. We always say permanent make-up will last in the skin between one and three years (sometimes indefinitely) and it will, but it won't look perfect so top ups are important for people to maintain the look. Also every year their faces are changing a little bit more so coming back in for top ups enables us to tweak the results in line with that."



Tracie Giles measures the brow to make sure it is symmetrical

Karen adds, "A good brow is definitely an anti-ageing secret for everybody. I would love every surgeon out there to be offering what we do alongside brow lifts. Just because someone has had a brow lift doesn't mean to say their brows are in the right place to start with or the right shape. Both of them really do compliment each other. A good percentage of people have got eyebrows that are laterally cantered and this can give them this really sad look - we can make a massive difference by just tweezing a few of those brow hairs out and creating the look from the eyebrows we place in there - we can lift even without Botox®."

And its not just women opting for the longer-lasting make-up look, Karen has also recently been receiving a lot of requests from men wanting to have semi-permanent 'guyliner'. Andrew Bedford, 25, who had the treatment with Karen comments, "Although I have confidence I have always been very self-conscious about my eyes. I entered a competition I heard advertised on the radio 'Ice Factor 2010' and knowing I had to make an impression at my auditions, I asked Jodie my partner to help me apply make-up around my eyes aiming for the look of Russell Brand or Johnny Depp in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. The result was amazing I



Before and after 'guyliner' treatment (pictures courtesy of Karen Betts)

loved it, I actually felt my eyes were a real focus point. This then lead to me wearing it more and more, if I was out and about at work people would stop and comment on my eyes on how well it looked. I started to wear it on a regular basis, if we went for a meal or a night out I'd get the same reaction, people were surprised to see a guy wearing make-up yet I'd be complimented at almost every venue we'd go in so I decided to look into having it permanently applied!

"I am now out working every day and in the public eye pursuing my challenge to win the 2010 Ice Factor. I'm no longer shy or self conscious about having the close ups for the

advertising/promotion photo shots. After my guyliner treatment with Karen I have now booked in for further treatments such as HD Brows as I believe this treatment will compliment Karen's work and once again lift my confidence to the next level."

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## MEDICAL TATTOOING

More and more practitioners within aesthetic clinics, hospitals and oncology departments are also now realising the potential of post-surgery and corrective micropigmentation.

"A hospital ward or operating theatre is probably the last place where you would expect to find a tattooist at work and yet every month a new hospital is offering this service to patients", says Samantha Jones co-director of leading cosmetic and medical tattooing company Finishing Touches, which has trained and supplied products to more than 300 hospitals and clinics in the UK and Europe.

The medical applications for the treatment are plentiful and include areola tattooing following mastectomy (perhaps the most popular) as well as eyebrow/eyelash reconstruction for alopecia patients who have lost hair through burns,



Acne scarring before micro needling (pictures courtesy of Finishing Touches)

Acne scarring after micro needling (pictures courtesy of Finishing Touches)

operations or accidents, camouflage of vitiligo, hair simulation on transplant sites, cosmetic correction of cleft palate, correction of facial asymmetry and camouflage of surgical scars.

The treatment can be used to camouflage vitiligo with particular success in patients with skin types V and VI. However great care should be taking when treating this condition, Debra Robson Lawrence only recommends performing the treatment on patients who have been stable for 10 years, otherwise it could trigger the disorder to spread outside the re-pigmented site.

"This is a straightforward, cost effective procedure which makes a world of difference to peoples' lives", says Sam. "Medical tattooing provides solutions where no other exists".

It is in treating these patients that most technicians say they get the most job satisfaction as the procedure can be life changing for many patients. Karen says, "The medical side is fantastic. I work with a lot of surgeons either doing theatre tattooing or showing them my techniques where I offer my services for this free of charge. Between yesterday and this afternoon I have done 15 breast clients. These ladies are the best ladies you can have. They have nearly lost their lives and they are so grateful for anything you can do for them. By the time they get to me they have been through all the trauma and I am just taking them back to normal. They have got breasts that have got no nipples or areolas on them and they don't



Vitiligo after (pictures courtesy of Finishing Touches)



Vitiligo before (pictures courtesy of Finishing Touches)

feel like they belong to themselves. All I am doing is putting the colour back in but I get all the tears and the emotions coming out because they look at themselves and feel they are back to normal. This is the type of work that allows you to give something back."

Mr Iain Brown, Consultant Oncoplastic Breast and General Surgeon Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust adds, "Nipple areola micropigmentation provides the final step in a reconstructive patients journey back to health. For many women this signifies an important milestone and has a significant role to play in the reparative process after loss of the breast",

In fact it was this desire to restore normality to patients' lives that inspired Dawn Forshaw to set up Finishing Touches. She said, "I was dealing with burns victims and people with alopecia and cancer and other diseases which cause hair loss through my wig manufacturing business. A lot of my

clients were saying they could handle not having any hair but what they couldn't deal with was now having eyebrows as it made them look androgynous. It was ruining their quality of life.

"We want medical tattooing to be widely available throughout the private and NHS sectors. The response we receive from hospital staff is very encouraging but it is the positive responses from the patients that really make this worthwhile."

Sam continues, "For many breast cancer survivors areola tattooing is often the 'finishing touch' to cancer recovery. Following breast reconstruction surgery, a patient is left with a re-shaped breast but areola colour, and often the nipple itself is missing. Finishing Touches teach how to use shading and highlighting to tattoo a realistic areola and nipple. Careful placing of the areola can improve the appearance, balance and symmetry of the breast. For most patients a breast tattoo is the final stage to a very long battle. Patients report they don't feel so self-conscious and have increased confidence and feel 'normal' again. There are so many possibilities, we are developing fantastic new innovative solutions which we know drastically improves quality of life; we are determined medical tattooing is made available throughout the NHS - the scope is vast but the cost, small."

One technician who is trying to take this one step further is Tracie Giles, who has just opened a new concept walk-in semi-permanent make-up

boutique on the high street in London's trendy Knightsbridge. She explains, "People who have alopecia or cancer don't want to feel like patients - its kind of getting away from that Harley Street environment. They come in here they get pampered, they can have a glass of champagne, there are chandeliers and big sumptuous cushions everywhere and they feel amazing when they leave they don't feel like victims of cancer. That was really important to me. "It's a long road they have had to face their own mortality and they have had an emotional and physical battering. Coming to have something like this done is a shift in their own mind that they are ready to restore themselves to normal and get on with their lives. It is a really really defining moment in that women's life, to walk out of here when they have felt awful for so long and have eyelashes again or have an areola restored is amazing and to have that in an environment that doesn't feel like a hospital is even better."

Although the treatment can also be used to re-introduce pigment to scars from accidents and burns, it can also be used, in the same way as dermal rolling, to encourage collagen production and help promote healing in scars. In this instance the same equipment/needles are used just without pigment - known as 'dry needling'. The process of injuring the skin with the needle promotes a wound healing response, encouraging collagen and melanin production and relaxing contractures, and thus the appearance of scars can be improved. Sam says, "The result leaves the scar looking flatter softer and less rigid. This simple and cost effective technique has produced amazing success where many other creams, patches and surgeries have failed."



A scar before micro needling (pictures courtesy of Finishing Touches)

A scar after micro needling (pictures courtesy of Finishing Touches)