

Lasers.

The word evokes images of an intergalactic battle from some sci-fi thriller. The reality is that since the 1960s, laser technology has been busy at work here on our planet, assisting physicians and helping people. And today it is transforming surgical procedures at every level of care. According to Raymond Lanzafame, M.D., vice president of medical affairs at Lakeside Hospital in Rochester, NY, previous director of the Laser Center at Rochester

BY JOHN MCINTOSH

Zap!

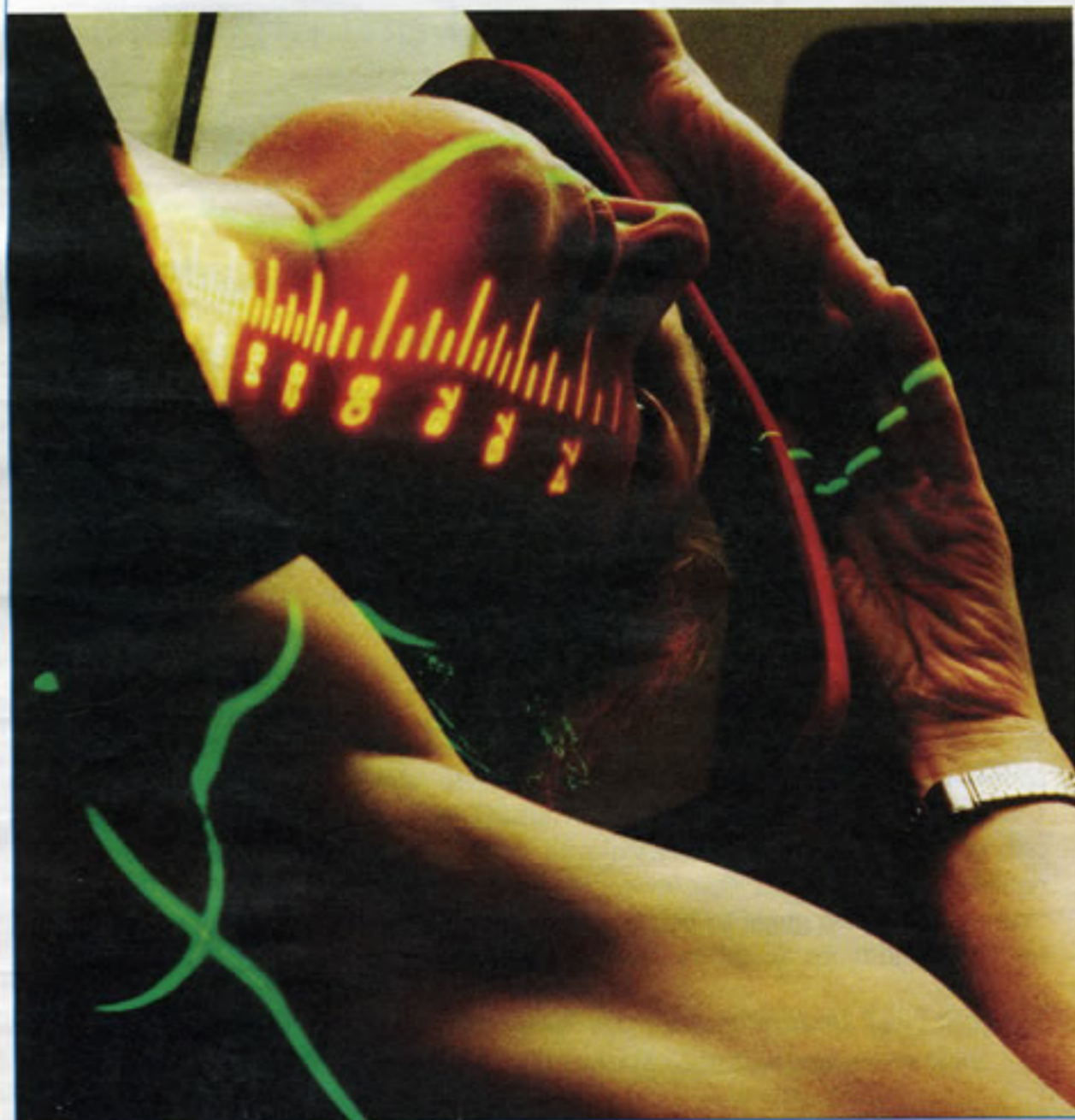
The marvel of medical lasers

REMEDY 111

light in focus

Geronemus, M.D., director of the Laser & Skin Surgery Center of New York, clinical professor of dermatology at New York University Medical Center and president of ASLMS. "Most of the laser work being performed is for cosmetic purposes, although we also treat

medical conditions such as birthmarks, which can worsen with time and become disfiguring." In addition to



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General Hospital and director for continuing medical education at the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery (ASLMS), "anything that can be done by scalpel can be done using lasers." But there is more to the picture than that. Laser technology allows doctors to perform procedures that otherwise would not be possible. For example, before the advent of lasers, there really wasn't much you could do to repair a damaged retina, much less change the shape of the cornea in order to improve vision. "Now," says Dr. Lanzafame, "there is a whole array of procedures that

are possible because of light."

Lasers & the Skin

"All the major breakthroughs in laser application that have taken place in the last 20 years have been in the area of dermatology," says Roy



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ponents—the wavelength of light that is used in the laser system and what's called the pulse duration, which is the amount of time the laser is applied to the skin."

Lasers & Major Surgery

Whether it's a gall bladder removal or minimally invasive robotic heart surgery, lasers are changing the operating room dramatically.



Potential risks associated with surgery have been reduced.

"Previously, a procedure such as transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) or a gall bladder removal would have resulted in a lot of disability, a lengthy hospitalization and the likelihood of transfusion," says Dr. Lanzafame. "Now, they have essentially been converted into operations that are done on an outpatient basis."

In addition to his specialty of gall bladder removal, Dr. Lanzafame also uses laser surgery for wound healing and heart surgery. Both are examples of procedures that once caused a lot of trauma to the body but now can be minimally invasive.