

A 40-Year Retrospective: “Permanent Makeup” The Invention That Defined an Industry

By Dr. Giora G. Angres

Forty years ago, the concept of permanent eyeliner as a precise medical procedure was virtually unknown. Cosmetic applications were a daily chore, and while body tattooing existed, the delicate, sensitive eyelid area remained largely uncharted territory for permanent pigmentation. It was a need for reliable, long-lasting cosmetic solutions particularly for patients with vision problems who struggled with daily makeup applications that sparked my research and ultimately led to a breakthrough that would forever change the landscape of cosmetic surgery and the beauty industry.

In 1984, I published my findings in medical journals, introducing “Permanent Eyeliner Method; A New Surgical Procedure.” This was not merely an incremental improvement of existing techniques; it was the formal medical and procedural foundation for what we now commonly refer to as “permanent makeup”.

The cornerstone of this invention was formalized by the United States Patent and Trademark Office with the granting of **US Patent #4,508,106** on April 2, 1985 (with a priority date of February 14, 1983). I also secured patents in Canada (Patent 1220691) and the European Union, including Germany and Australia, to protect the intellectual property worldwide. The patent covered both the apparatus and, critically, the microsurgical method for applying a permanent or semi-permanent pigment solution to the anesthetized and stabilized eyelid edge or lash line.

The invention was unique because it utilized an anesthesiology protocol and a guide mechanism with specialized needles to ensure precise and safe pigment implantation into the dermal or epidermal layer of the skin, a significant innovation for such a delicate area. This meticulous approach elevated the procedure from a fringe tattooing practice to a legitimate cosmetic surgical option.

The immediate interest in the procedure was explosive. Prior to my publications, there were essentially no websites or publications describing modern permanent makeup; afterward, the field flourished. I was inspired by the wide-spread interest to begin teaching the technique, training hundreds of physicians, nurses, and technicians in the cosmetic field. This education was essential for the safe and effective dissemination of the method.

Today, nearly 40 years later, permanent makeup is one of the most common cosmetic procedures performed globally, in and out of medical offices. The proliferation of schools and practitioners is a testament to the enduring demand for this procedure. However, the rapid expansion has not been without its challenges. The lack of standardized, mandatory licensing in many jurisdictions has led to a proliferation of poorly trained technicians. This shortfall poses a significant public health risk, as improper technique can lead to infections, pigment migration, allergic reactions, and scarring. The original medical rigor I established in my patent and training protocols highlights the critical need for comprehensive, medically informed education to ensure patient safety and uphold professional standards across the industry.

Reflecting on the last four decades, the journey from a patented surgical innovation to a global beauty phenomenon has been remarkable. It is a source of immense pride to have pioneered a field that has provided confidence and convenience to hundreds of thousands of individuals worldwide.

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