

ATHANASSIOS KALIUDIS

60 years of lasers: Gimme the news, Holo-Doc!

Why hard rock and lasers are the best medicine for heartache – an all kinds of other aches and pains

"Damn laser!" – who would say a thing like that!? Chris Turk in the second series of US comedy drama Scrubs, which ran in the noughties. The young surgeon is annoyed because his superior has forced him to ask Chief of Medicine Bob Kelso for a new argon laser. A bitter pill to swallow, as Kelso is universally regarded as the devil incarnate: a man who often belittles his staff for no other reason than his own enjoyment – and who is vehemently opposed to spending money on new medical equipment. So it's understandable that Turk bad-mouths the laser.

It's a shame, because argon lasers do great work for medics, especially in the field of dermatology, where they are used to remove pigment spots and treat vascular skin disorders.

I am sure that the doc from the sci-fi series Star Trek: Voyager (from the late 1990s) – simply known as "the Doctor" – would have soon persuaded Turk of the virtues of laser technology. After all, he is pretty much a laser himself or, to be more precise, a hologram. Actually, the holo doc was programmed to assist the fleshand-blood doctors on board the USS Voyager. But with the spaceship stranded on the far side of the galaxy – and the entire medical team dead – the holo doc is the only crew member with medical experience. He diligently performs his duties as the ship's doctor and, as the series progresses, he picks up human traits and forms his own character. AI and lasers – what a beautiful love story! And for us laser fans, what could be more exciting than the thought of being cured by a laser doctor if we got a case of "warp speed sickness" in the farthest corner of the galaxy? Amazing!

AI and lasers – what a beautiful love story!

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And because there is always one song or another playing in my head, I am reminded of the rock musician Robert Palmer. In 1979, he sang the words "I need you, to soothe my head […] Doctor Doctor, gimme the news / I got a bad case of lovin' you". Might lasers even be able to ease heartache?

This would probably be of great interest to Bob Kelso. Ultimately, Chris Turk got his argon laser. And how? He catches Kelso

being unfaithful – and uses this knowledge as a means of coercion. As a result, Kelso decides that it's better to approve the money for the laser. He probably also has the words of Doctor, Doctor by Palmer ringing in his ears: "No pill's gonna cure my ill" – something that no one wants to hear their loved ones say.



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