

Expert Roundtable Series:

# Important Considerations When Choosing a Body Shaping Device for Your Practice

By Jeffrey Frentzen, Executive Editor

**A**ccording to market research published by Medical Insight, Inc. (Aliso Viejo, Calif.), sales of body shaping and skin tightening devices are booming and expected to rise by 13.2% per year, driven by rising consumer interest in these procedures. This exploding patient demand for non-invasive aesthetic treatments has compelled many practitioners to invest in energy-based body shaping devices, but how does one determine the most effective, best performing technology? In this roundtable discussion, seven expert physicians share their experience with various energy-based systems, advising on how to apply solid evaluation criteria when looking to upgrade or when buying for the first time.

# Important Factors to Consider When Choosing a Body Shaping System for Your Practice



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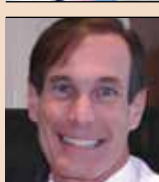
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For physicians that do not currently offer energy-based body shaping, or are looking to upgrade their existing technology, what criteria should they use to measure performance?

**Z. Paul Lorenc, M.D., F.A.C.S.** — The first question that should be asked is: Is there a need in your practice for fat reduction or body contouring devices? Next, does the technology work and is it cost-effective. Every device company is trying to be more innovative than the next one as far as leasing and marketing programs. The valuation of bringing in a device is becoming more and more complex by the minute. As a practice you need to evaluate and assess all of those things, but even then sometimes you don't have a clear answer.

**Andrew Nelson, M.D.** — My two main criteria are: Is it safe and is it effective? It is debatable which of these is most important. If you have an effective device that isn't safe, you don't really have anything. If you have a safe device that is not effective, you also don't have anything. At the same time, if you're a physician who is entering the world of aesthetics and you do not offer a non-invasive body contouring treatment then you're going to lose your patients to somebody who does. I use a platform-based approach that comprises several systems from InMode Aesthetic Solutions (Toronto, Ontario, Canada), including the Body FX, which is a non-invasive RF-based device.

**Candace Thornton Spann, M.D., F.A.A.D. and Marvin Spann, M.D.** — For many physicians, cost is a big issue, and a lot of systems involve disposables where you are continually paying for a product just to use the system, which is a drawback. As well, expandability is important. We use the VShape platform from Alma Lasers Inc. (Buffalo Grove, Ill.), which delivers RF-based energy via multiple handpieces to promote a temporary reduction in cellulite, reduce wrinkles and resurface the skin.

**Mark B. Taylor, M.D.** — When I began my search the first questions I asked were: What is the technology? How much pain is associated with it? How many treatments will it take to see results? Is it going to be cost-effective for both the patient and the clinic? Are any of the disposables expensive? There are a lot of different factors that come into play with body shaping technologies. I use the whole range of body shaping procedures – liposuction, Smartlipo, BodyJet and VASER – including non-invasive. A segment of people just have small, localized areas of fat. They're busy and / or surgery averse, and will be satisfied with minimal improvement, no downtime and multiple treatments.

**Fredric A. Stern, M.D.** — The physician should have a clear understanding of what specific types of lipodystrophy patients he / she wants to treat, and how effective a totally non-invasive modality would be for each type of patient, as opposed to a surgical, but minimally invasive approach. Some physicians may only want to use non-invasive devices, which is fine for certain patients with minimal underlying lipodystrophy. However, this may limit the effectiveness and speed of

patient results compared to a minimally invasive approach that offers quicker and more profound results, but requires more expertise.

While all body shaping systems operate on a similar principle of heat or cold applied to tissue to eliminate fat, many different technologies are used to achieve results. What are the most popular applications and are they scientifically sound?

**Douglas J. Key, M.D.** — Due to thermal imaging we know the bulk volume being heated is very transient. When I heat under the surface with the ThermiRF system from ThermiAesthetics (Southlake, Texas), the dermis is heated last. With the neck and arms, we are interested in tightening structure, not skin and we can achieve very sustained periods of tightening. We don't want to injure the patient or sub treat, either. When it comes to non-invasive body contouring, tightening and shaping, there is a satisfaction among patients, but does it measure up to our criteria of reproducible photography?

**Jon Perlman, M.D., F.A.C.S.** — Liposuction is very thorough, the most complete method of sculpting a body. I was looking for a non-surgical body sculpting device that provided a good alternative to liposuction. The iLipo system from Chromogenex U.S., Ltd. (Howell, Mich.) features low power 680 nm to 685 nm laser wavelengths, which stimulate the fat cells to create a pore that opens up the cell wall and allows the triglycerides in the fat cell to exit as free fatty acids. Vacuum massage stimulates the lymphatics and we hydrate the patients to help the lymphatic flow. We also ask the patients to burn calories through exercise.

**Dr. Stern** — For bulk contouring, laser lipolysis combined with power and suction-assisted liposuction is the gold standard. For more precise body shaping, I prefer minimally invasive laser lipolysis using a tiny laser fiber. Also, not all heat is the same. Heat flows and exhibits a changing spatial gradient with a specific temperature profile. Temperature control is important to achieve reproducible results and there are several good devices on the market. In my practice, the SkinTyte BBL device from Sciton (Palo Alto, Calif.), with finesse adapters and no consumables, serves me very well as a standalone procedure. I use this device for all of my post liposuction and post-CelluSmooth™ (Sciton) patients as well, to achieve optimal skin tightening and stimulate collagen formation during the healing process.

Newer applications that I am observing are high definition liposculpting and muscle toning. Often, I also combine technologies such as ProLipo™, CelluSmooth and SkinTyte™ to simultaneously treat excess adiposity, lumpy and dimpled skin and laxity. I have seen excellent results in these patients.

Radiofrequency (RF)-based systems are proliferating. What must providers consider when choosing between monopolar, bi-polar and / or multipolar?

**Dr. Perlman** — Without making a commitment to a certain technology, I think it is difficult to know the facts. In marketing their services, both physicians and



Before Tx



After eight BodyFX treatments  
Photos courtesy of the Jannaé Institute



Before Tx



After four BodyFX treatments  
Photos courtesy of the Diane Duncan, M.D.