experts Shares Start-to-Finish Thread Lift Pearls

Procedure’s success depends on identifying and correctly marking the area of facial ‘descent.’

BY KERRI WACHTER  SENIOR WRITER

WILLIAMSBURG, VA. — Thread lifts produce predictable results because the procedure corrects the downward shift of facial skin with age, something that excisional face-lifts don’t address, Dr. Stephen H. Mandy said at a meeting sponsored by Skin Disease Education Foundation.

“Standard face-lifts tend to move the face posteriorly … The problem (with the aging face) is a vertical descent,” he said. Dr. Mandy, professor of dermatology at the University of Miami.

The descent of the malar fat pad creates the nasolabial folds, the hollow under the eye, and the jowl, and the prejowl sulcus, Dr. Mandy explained.

He estimates that half of his patients have already had a face-lift but are still unhappy with the nasolabial folds and jowls.

Good candidates for this procedure have soft tissue facial prosthesis and moderate soft tissue thickness. Without adequate subcutaneous tissue, there is nothing for the bars to hook into. The threads can also be seen if there is not enough subcutaneous tissue, he said.

The most important portion of the procedure is marking where the threads will be placed. This should be done with the patient in a seated position. Determine where the facial descent is located. “If you have a heavily malar descent, you’re going to put two threads to that malar fat pad,” Dr. Mandy said. The threads exit near the nasolabial folds and jowls, improving these two areas, unlike what occurs with a standard face-lift.

There are two types of threads. The two-sided Articulus 400 series (part of the Contour Threads family made by Surgical Specialties Corp.) has two straight needles with a single thread. The bars face in the opposite direction to the needle on each end, with no bars in the center of the thread. No knots need to be tied with this thread type. Contour Threads are single threads with bars facing in the opposite direction to the needle. They are approved for midface, brow, and neck suspension.

The second type of thread, the Feath-erlift extended-length Apatos thread (Kol-ster Medical Inc.), has barbs on both ends and is approved for use in midface suspension surgery to fix the cheek subdermis in an elevated position.

Dr. Mandy has received compensation as a Contour Threads instructor.

For a brow lift, one double thread (Articulus 400 series)—or two single threads (Apatos)—is fixed on each side just behind the hairline, and the ends exit at the eyebrow. A third double thread (or two single threads) comes from behind the hairline at the central forehead to the medial brow on one side and frontally—will improve strength by increasing the number of bars anchoring the thread. When the thread is positioned, pull back from the entry point to allow the bars to “bite” into the tissue, he said.

Next, the tissue between the arms of the threads is blunted dissected with a sharp-point dissector. The technique is similar to that used with a liposuction cannula. “The beauty of it is that you’re now creating a biomechanical lift … so that when you lift that skin, you’re basically moving the top plane over the bottom plane,” Dr. Mandy said. In addition, the tissue healing process occurs all along the “giant flip” of skin.

Finally, the tissue is contoured by basically “walking” the tissue up the threads.

Real-World Comparative Data Place Radiesse Over Sculptra

BY ALICIA AULT  ASSOCIATE EDITOR, PRACTICE TRENDS

TORONTO — The injectable filler Radiesse appears to offer an edge over Sculptra when it comes to ease of use, cost-effectiveness, and patient satisfaction, Dr. Stuart Bentkover said at the annual fall meeting of the American Academy of Facial and Reconstructive Plastic Surgery.

Dr. Bentkover offered results on 216 patients using both products at his facial plastic surgery practice in Worcester, Mass. Radiesse “is, out of the box, very easy to use on day 1,” he said.

There is an immediate augmentation with the product, but about 10% will be lost by 2-6 months. He tells patients that the full effect lasts about 10-14 months.

The product, composed of calcium hydroxyapatite microspheres and sold by BioForm Medical Inc., is approved by the Food and Drug Administration for oral and maxillofacial defects, vocal fold insufficiency, and radiographic tissue marking. Approval is pending for HIV-related lipodystrophy and nasolabial folds (SKIN & ALLERGY NEWS, October 2006, p. 1).

Sculptra (injectable poly-L-lactic acid) is approved by the FDA for facial fat loss in HIV-infected patients and used off-label for cosmetic purposes. It is not as pa-
tient- or user-friendly because patients must massage the area five times daily for 5 minutes for 5 days after injection, he said.

Sculptra is sold by Dermik Laborato-ries, a subsidiary of Sanofi-Aventis. Unlike Radiesse, which can be used quickly, Sculptra has to be reconstituted 2 hours before the procedure. The product does not stay in suspension easily and often requires multiple syringes, as they tend to clog, Dr. Bentkover said.

He calculated the surgeon cost per session at $304 with Radiesse, compared with $480 for Sculptra. The costs are not radically different, but the need for a second session is higher with Sculptra, he said.

With Radiesse, he has seen persistent erythema in two patients, a viral infection, and skin slough. The most common complication is superficial infection. Four pa-
tients who received Sculptra in jections developed nodules, most-
ly around their eyes.

Overall complication rates in nasolabial folds were 4.6% for Radiesse and 19% for Sculptra. These are, however, based on a small number of patients, he said.

Dr. Bentkover said that he has stopped using Sculptra because of the complication rate.

Another surgeon, Dr. Phillip Langdon, chief of facial plastic surgery at the University of Ten-
ssee in Memphis, said that he thinks Sculptra is a good product with few side effects. “I’ve been injecting Sculptra for 2 years and haven’t seen any nodules yet,” he told meeting attendees.

Dr. Langdon said that he had no interest in Dermik or Sanofi-Aventis.

Dr. Bentkover is on the nation-
al teaching faculty for Radiesse and lectures for Rhysic Inc.