

The explosive growth of cosmetic injectables gives patients more options for minimally invasive facial rejuvenation — the 'liquid facelift'; Dr. Clevens crisscrosses the nation as conference speaker

By Ken Datzman

The menu has never been more inviting: Sculptra, Juvederm, Radiesse, Botox, Restylane, Hylaform and CosmoDerm, among others. In the pipeline are more injectable fillers including Reloxin, a Botox-like drug expected to reach physicians next year.

Injectable fillers are typically the most requested minimally invasive cosmetic procedures today at facial plastic surgeons' offices. They are fast reshaping the non-surgical landscape as new, longer-lasting products pour onto the market giving consumers choices like never before.

Companies are positioning their products to gain a foothold in a growth sector that is being pushed to new heights by advances in technology. Roughly 8 million minimally invasive cosmetic procedures were performed in 2005, up 53 percent since 2000, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

"There has been an explosion in the last two years in minimally invasive options for patients," says Dr. Ross Clevens, a board-certified facial plastic surgeon who practices at the Center for Facial Cosmetic Surgery and is a popular speaker at medical conferences across the nation. With so many options available, he adds, "As a physician you can well-manage their expectations relative to outcomes, their recovery concerns and their sensitivity relative to cost. So it's a whole new calculus."

While a lot of new injectables are on the rise, Botox remains "tremendously popular" to consumers, Dr. Clevens says. "We probably inject 1,000 patients a year in our office," placing him among the 100 most experienced Botox physicians in the nation. Since the 1980s collagen has been used as a soft-tissue filler, leading the way for a wave of products to follow. "But somehow Botox really caused the rage."

Trained at Yale, Harvard and the University of Michigan, Dr. Clevens is president of the Florida Society of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. He also chairs the Socio-Economic Committee of the parent organization, the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

Dr. Clevens has been an invited speaker at a number of facial plastic surgery meetings recently. He's crisscrossed the nation from Boca Raton to Newport Beach, Calif., to Columbus, Ohio, to Toronto, Ontario, Canada, talking on a variety of topics including nasal plastic surgery, eyelid surgery, facelift surgery, lip surgery and Portrait-skin resurfacing. Typically, from 200 to 500 people attend the meetings. The group is generally plastic surgeons and cosmetic dermatologists; about 10 percent of the attendees are from abroad.

"Interestingly, as I attend the national meetings today the patient focus is on achieving the greatest benefit with the shortest possible downtime. Four to seven years ago it was on doing more comprehensive and aggressive procedures. The pendulum is swinging," says Dr. Clevens, who has offices in Melbourne and Merritt Island.

One of those longer-lasting, less-invasive procedures Dr. Clevens performs is Sculptra, an FDA-approved filler that some people call the "liquid facelift" because it creates the "look of a facelift." Sculptra can be used to fill wrinkles and facial-folds while stimulating new collagen production, creating younger, plumper skin, he says. It lasts from two to five years and is used to enhance the mid-face and upper face. "Sculptra," Dr. Clevens said, "is a series of injections that are performed over the course of three or four months. The result is gradual. Patients can have Sculptra injections performed and return to work immediately. It literally takes 10 minutes to do the injections."

He says Sculptra is not a "filler per se." It is made of "poly-L-lactic acid," which occurs naturally in the human body. Because Sculptra contains a non-animal based poly-L-lactic acid, no skin-testing is required and there is little risk of allergic reaction. "It's been used abroad in hundreds of thousands of patients and has a very favorable safety profile."

"Prevention" magazine named Sculptra as one of the "top eight beauty breakthroughs of 2005." Sculptra was initially designed to improve the appearance of facial features of people who lost weight because of the side effects of medication used to treat human immunodeficiency virus. Plastic surgeons have now discovered that Sculptra also improves the appearance of the cheeks, eyes and temples that tend to change as people age.

Another new procedure that is being embraced by patients is Portrait-skin resurfacing, now available in physician offices across the country. It was developed by



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Dr. Ross Clevens is president of the Florida Society of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. Juany Goudy, left, is a licensed medical aesthetician and Jeanne Bedard is a registered nurse. Dr. Clevens also sits on the Socio-Economic Committee of the parent organization, the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. He has been a featured speaker at meetings from Newport Beach, Calif., to Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Dr. Clevens practices at the Center for Facial Cosmetic Surgery, with offices in Melbourne and Merritt Island.

Rhytec Inc. of Waltham, Mass.

The Portrait plasma technology represents a dramatic leap forward in the science of beauty, physicians say, one that addresses the growing demand for cosmetic improvement with predictable downtime and little to no risk of hypo-pigmentation, scarring, discoloration or other complications generally associated with other more aggressive anti-aging treatments. Says Dr. Clevens: "It creates a dramatic improvement in lines, wrinkles and brown spots, for example. The procedure tightens the skin by 15 to 20 percent and it can be performed in the office with light sedation and local anesthesia. It takes about 20 minutes to treat the full face." Recovery time is about four to six days. The skin is mildly pink for two to three weeks. "The healing characteristics are such that the downtime is minimal."

Dr. Clevens says Portrait is unique in that it employs a highly energized gaseous state known as plasma, which produces a thermal profile at and below the skin's surface. This stimulates remodeling of the skin's architecture, replacing old, damaged collagen with significant amounts of new collagen — the key to long-lasting improvement of skin. Nitrogen is a colorless, odorless gaseous element that when introduced to ultra-high frequency energy is converted to plasma.

If you are interested in learning more about some of these procedures, visit Dr. Clevens' content-rich Web site (www.drCLEVENS.com). The site was recently revamped to include more material and photographs. Dr. Clevens says his portal draws a lot of traffic. "The Internet is a very powerful marketing tool."

His office also offers an assortment of treatment packages that can be purchased individually or bundled and given as holiday gifts. The practice sells a number of high-end skin-care brands, too.