

CELLULITE: A Clinician's Viewpoint

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Much has been written about mesotherapy and its applicability to treating cellulite, and European and South American physicians have already had much success with such treatment. Now, American physicians are rapidly expanding their use of mesotherapy for the treatment of cellulite and other appropriate conditions.

Art or Science?

Medicine has long been called the “healing art,” but medicine today also challenges us as scientists. Many in medicine are reluctant to undertake anything that is not written in stone, proven beyond doubt, or known to reliably reproduce a given effect in a defined setting. Others practitioners are more flexible.

The exact pathophysiology of cellulite currently eludes us. A combination of deficiency or defect in connective tissue structure, adipose tissue biochemistry, microvascular circulation, and/or lymphatic drainage has been postulated.

When it comes to treatment decisions, we are most comfortable with proven facts, which raises a clinical dilemma: Absent significant side effects, can we approach certain medical conditions from a pragmatic point of view and do what works, or must we rigidly adhere to our scientific principles and only treat what is clearly defined and with modalities that are clearly applicable?

Pathopharmacology

Enough is known about the pathology of cellulite to facilitate the selection of a set of matching pharmacologic agents for each presumed etiology. Proper formulations of lidocaine, phosphatidylcholine, carnitine, pentoxifylline, hyaluronidase, collagenase, lipase, cellulase, aminophylline, melilotus, and other substances have been proven beyond doubt to provide nearly guaranteed success in the temporary amelioration of cellulite.

Applied Pharmacology

To quote an experienced American mesotherapist, “All mesotherapy procedures are a kind of applied pharmacology.” Acceptance of this approach is only a matter of time and will be hastened by the collection and publication of the large body of extant data, which we intend to undertake in the near future.

Form and Function

The basic rule that “form follows function” implies that if an object – or a treatment – is to perform a certain function – say, to eliminate cellulite – its design must support that function to the fullest extent possible. I believe that mesotherapy relates to cellulite in just such a functional manner.

The Ultimate Arbiter

It is said that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the proof of a therapy is often in the outcome. While it remains incumbent upon us as scientists to pursue the exact mechanism of, for example, cellulite, that is not to say that we cannot – or should not – utilize the information available now based on patient response and satisfaction. After all, William Osler himself told us, “Medicine is learned at the bedside and not in the classroom.”

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