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Rotary tool, hypertumescent liposuction improve male breast reduction

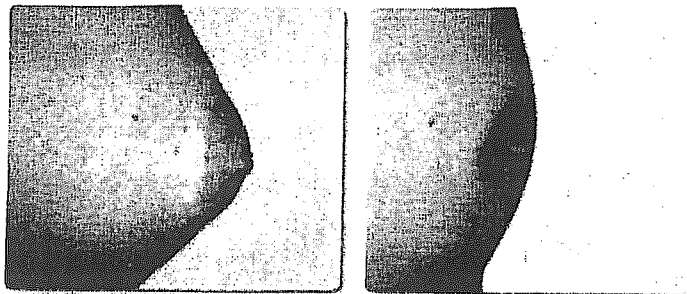
By John Jesitus
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Philadelphia - Hypertumescent liposuction performed with a rotary-assisted power tool represents the state of the art for treating gynecomastia, according to Jeffrey B. Schafer, M.D. He is medical director of Coronado, Calif.-based New Image Cosmetic Surgery.

"Gynecomastia is actually more common than you think," Dr. Schafer said, "because men, being macho and not as talkative as women, don't discuss their problems."

Gynecomastia also inflicts social and emotional consequences. "One patient told me he plays pool rather than going to the pool, and he selects his friends [accordingly]," Dr. Schafer said. "It changes your life because you're embarrassed by this condition." It can be caused by being overweight or, in some cases, steroid use. Its root cause is excess testosterone, which the body converts to estrogen, then to estradiol.

Liposuction has proven a boon to gynecomastia sufferers. Dr. Schafer said that as soon as he began to publish before and after photos of patients treated with a manual cannula using the tumescent technique, "We got a huge volume of phone calls from people wanting to come in



Gynecomastia before (left) and after use of hypertumescent liposuction performed with a rotary-assisted tool. (Photos Jeffrey Schafer, M.D.)

because they never knew there was any type of treatment available."

Before long, Dr. Schafer's practice was treating patients of all shapes and sizes. He quickly learned that breast tissue varied as well. Softer fatty tissue was easiest to remove. In contrast, Dr. Schafer said, "I found out that [in] the people who had the true breast tissue, it was really firm, hard, and fibrous. So I had to figure out some way to get the breast tissue out without making a bunch of incisions or cutting it out."

He calls his solution the hypertumescent technique. It involves hyper filling fibrous breast tissue with three to four times the normal amount of saline. "Rather than

just making it firm," he explained, "I blow it up extremely hard. On a man's breast, I can put in a liter or more of fluid to really get that expanded." This way, the material flows more fluidly through the cannula.

"We've tried all different types of techniques," Dr. Schafer said, "and this one seems to work very well. I can usually treat most men in 20 minutes per side." The entire procedure takes less than an hour.

To further refine his technique, Dr. Schafer switched to a rotary power-assisted tool (the STARS, Soft Tissue Advanced Rotary Sculpture made by KMI). It rotates to the right and left, allowing for smoother

passage of the cannula. "It actually removes the tissue even more effectively," Dr. Schafer said, "and it's very gentle." Somewhat like a cast cutter, the tool leaves intact the tissue under the nipple and other sensitive areas. It's also strong enough to handle dense fibrous tissue.

"The amount removed varies from a minimum of 300 cc to, on some large patients, over one liter," he said. "I call this procedure hypertumescent power sculpting, and the whole idea of doing it this way is you only have to make a small incision in the armpit" rather than a larger one around the nipple. "This allows you to shape the breast into a more normal shape."

"You can actually do a contour map, and you can have a game plan so that you have appropriate elevation levels," Dr. Schafer said.

Post-operative treatments include the use of Reston foam (made by 3M Healthcare) and compression vests. To avoid an uneven appearance, Dr. Schafer has everyone in the operating room visually compare one breast to the other before he's finished with a patient. Three percent of patients are so large (in excess of 300 pounds) that they require a second treatment. Dr. Schafer possesses no financial interest in any products discussed in this article. **CST**



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