

Interview with Dr Barry Lycka & Dr Sabrina Fabi

Dr Barry Lycka cosmetic dermatologist from Edmonton, Alberta is talking today with

Dr Sabrina Fabi, Board Certified Dermatologist from Cosmetic Laser Dermatology, San Diego.

Today we are going to talk more about those non-invasive techniques. Why? Because these are the number one growth area in cosmetic surgery these days. Non-invasive techniques are where all the growth is happening. Surgical techniques such as liposuction and breast implants are still being done but the numbers have more or less tailed off – and that is because the customer wants less and less invasive things done and yet better and better results. No-one can afford downtime anymore.

Welcome, Dr Fabi!

Let's dive into this! One of the things that is talked about a lot to replace liposuction is techniques that can remove fat without surgery. Do these actually work, Dr Fabi?

Yes – they do work. Some of the technologies out there definitely have more literature to support that they work than others and unfortunately some come onto the market and they don't even have an indication for true fat reduction which causes other techniques to lose their credibility somewhat as they are all being 'lumped' together in the same category.

Let's talk about the first one on our list – the one that many people have heard of according to a survey – and that is Coolsculpting. What is Coolsculpting and how does that work?

That is the one that actually has over 31 peer review papers to support its claim. It actually came about from an observation from Dr. R. Rox Anderson and Dr. Dieter Manstein, dermatologists at Harvard, who had noticed that fat when exposed to cold temperatures was decreased. Kids that twirled popsicles inside their mouths would lose the fat cells there. They also got a group of women who were riding horses in the Boston area who lost the fat on their inner thighs. They wondered why these things were happening. The ladies were putting a cold saddle on a horse then riding it which was causing their fat to go away, by inducing inflammation in the fat.

The two doctors found that you can essentially selectively freeze the fat whilst sparing the top layer of the skin, and induce an inflammation that is very controlled to the fat layer. They came up with the device and when they called it Coolsculpting – everyone jumped on it.

Dr Lycka was one of the users who started with it about 5 years ago, as an early adapter, and he is still impressed at how well it works to get rid of smaller areas of fat.

So for patients who are within their ideal body weight and have some areas of stubborn fat that they just cannot get rid of no matter how much they exercise and diet, in Dr Fabi's practice Coolsculpting is very successful. Patients are very pleasantly surprised even when they have realistic expectations that it will only probably reduce between 20% & 30% of the fat that is treated.

Dr Lycka has been very impressed, and has even tried it on his own lower abdomen and he found that it worked very, very well. Usually people say that it is one to three treatments but he thinks that with one treatment you can see a noticeable decrease in the amount of fat in the area. Dr Fabi agrees also – at least 80% of her patients are happy with just one treatment, and if they are doing a second treatment it is not because they didn't see a result after one, it is just that they are wanting even more of a result. It is one of the technologies that Dr Fabi can confidently say that in one treatment you can have a significant fat reduction.

Have you seen any complications from it, Dr Fabi? Dr Lycka has really seen none in treating hundreds of patients, the complication rate has been virtually zero. Have you seen a similar effect?

Dr Fabi completely agrees with Dr Lycka and that is why she feels completely comfortable recommending it because the complication rate has pretty much been zero. Most patients always experience that tingling and numbness after the treatment that lasts maybe four weeks at most in the treated area. Maybe a small percentage – she warns her patients that maybe 0.01 % patients will have pain in that area, instead of that numbness. That is usually alleviated with Tylenol (pain relief), but that is maybe the most significant thing that patients may experience pain instead of numbness after treatment. Otherwise just some bruising.

Dr Lycka agrees that numbness is very common – he was numb for about a month after his treatment. He did find that when the machine goes on, it does cause some discomfort to some patients, and Dr Lycka experienced that too. But it was still manageable. But once enough cooling has been delivered, then it goes numb and you can no longer feel anything, and the numbness comes on all of a sudden.

Let's go onto the next one.

This is one that a lot of people are hearing about these days, and Dr Lycka became aware of it maybe 7 or 8 years ago, called Liposonix. What do you know about that one, Dr Fabi?

Liposonix uses high intensity focused ultrasound waves that are larger than your skin tightening technologies such as Ulthera. It basically breaks up the fat cells using the ultrasound waves, heating up those fat cells and with a fast vibration they break. It gives permanent fat reduction in the area but because of the intensity of that ultrasound energy it can be painful. So although Dr Fabi has seen nice fat reduction – again up to 30% reduction in the treated area. There was a great study that came out in Germany where they treated 88 patients and followed them, and for a single treatment they noticed at two months there was only about 40% of patients were happy with their results because they didn't see much reduction. But, at 3 and 4 months, up to 80% of patients noticed a significant reduction in their treated area. So you can get good reduction, but unfortunately it is a little more painful.

That is the experience of Dr Lycka also. When he first became aware of it he studied it pretty intensely because one of the companies that Dr Lycka knew very well wanted him to try one, then he started asking people about it and there were some incidents of burns right at the start and skin had problems, so he shied away from it, and is still a little leery of it to this day.

Dr Fabi has treated a good amount with it and has had no complications, the only thing is check for burns as with Coolsculpting, and the nice thing is you can treat a large area - for instance, an entire abdomen and waist, in maybe an hour and a half. This is versus the Coolsculpting technology where if you are treating a full abdomen and waist you may require up to 6 'cups' depending upon the size of the body, maybe even 8 and for each cup it takes up to an hour to treat. If you have two devices it may cut the treatment time in half, so its four hours, but that is still four hours for the patient. The only negative is that the hour and a half treatment with the Liposonix can be rather uncomfortable. So in Dr Fabi's practice, they medicate the patients, with an intramuscular shot of Demerol.

Dr Lycka feels that level of medication is significant and he has many patients who want to drive in and drive home by themselves, with not much downtime, so if Dr Lycka has to do all that 'hard work' he might as well just do liposuction. And that is usually the predicament that Dr Fabi identifies – at that point to cover all that area, and they are already medicated, so we would want to do Lipo-sculpture because at least we can achieve 80% reduction of fat vs just maybe the 20% to 30% reduction that the non-invasive technologies can offer. But Liposonix is a nice technology for that person who is completely against, for one reason or another, having any insertion of a cannula, anything that is truly considered minimally invasive or invasive, but don't want to spend between four and eight hours being treated. This is an alternative for them that has shown in many studies to be effective.

Now we are going to talk about some of the things being used on the face.

Many years ago Dr Lycka started talking about the concept of combinations of procedures, and now its widespread, very much a buzzword these days – isn't it, Dr Fabi?

Yes it is. As we have talked about before, we are aging at multiple levels in the face – we are losing bone, we are losing fat, we have muscles that are moving and creating lines and wrinkles, and we are also losing about 6-10% collagen turnover with each decade of life. And so when we just address one layer of the face, whether it's the fat layer by

augmenting with volume or just the top layer with a laser, we are not giving the patient a comprehensive result. So when we combine our treatment modalities we can offer a comprehensive and natural result to our patients.

What are your favorite tools to combine? And I know you combine many of these things on the same day.

Yes – Dr Fabi does that because a lot of her patients are working professionals or they are mothers and they have someone to finally take care of their kids for just one day, and they just want to get it all done and over with and not come back for a couple of months, and so to make it convenient for her patients, Dr Fabi tries to combine as many procedures in one day – but obviously that is within the realms of safety. Dr Fabi has published with her associate Dr Mich Goldman on the use of combining IPL (Intense Pulsed Light) to treat the more superficial skin changes such as the brown and the reds, and on the same day the micro-focused ultrasound (specifically Ulthera) which targets the deeper muscles that are commonly targeted in facelifts and neck lifts and then also straight after the Ulthera, volumizing the face with something like Sculptra which has been shown to give some nice volume and stimulating one's own collagen production. We proposed when we followed at least 100 patients that we did this combination on in our practice, that patients achieve superior results and the safety is not compromised. Patients are not more swollen or more bruised when we combine these modalities than if we did them alone.

Dr Fabi also does a lot of fractional resurfacing as well with many of these things. That is using a laser to put tiny little holes into the skin and refine the skin – and that has been a big benefit for a lot of these patients as well. Yes, because commonly the micro-focused ultrasound treatment that we use for skin laxity and jaw line tightening, the average age is 55 years old, at least half are older than that. In Southern California at least, patients that have that degree of laxity that require that type of treatment, also usually have wrinkles around their mouths, crepiness under their eyes, that we are also trying to treat, that the micro-focused ultrasound just is not ideal for those and won't have a significant result in achieving something meaningful there. So when Dr Fabi can combine it with a fractionated CO₂ laser which can treat the crepiness around the eyes, and more effectively stimulate collagen production superficially to improve the lines around the mouth, the patients see a better result because not only are we tightening their jawline and lifting some of that tissue on their neck but we are also improving some of those static wrinkles on their face. Dr Lycka has also been doing that for around three years now.

More recently, Dr Lycka has also combined a lot of this with micro-needling as well. This uses a machine called EndyMed which has 112 gold plated needles which go in very fine like a hair, and these apply a little RF (Radio Frequency) to the skin, and the reason why he got into that machine was because European studies were showing even less downtime than doing laser. Lasers don't cause much downtime, but if you can get the downtime to less than a day, we are going to win more, and that's why Dr Lycka started into it and for the last 6 months he is getting even better results, sometimes it has to be repeated, but people love the repetition because there is no downtime. His nurse had it done and was back at work in the afternoon.

Yes, that is the nice thing with micro-needling. You can also add growth factors into those little channels that the needles create, and that will stimulate collagen production. You also see rapid healing when you do apply the growth factors. That is a study that Dr Fabi is going to be doing so she is very excited to participate in it. Dr Lycka hasn't had growth factors so he has been using platelet rich plasma instead and have been getting pretty good results with that too. They are pretty much one's own growth factors at that point. So then the question becomes whether we actually need that bit of heat – that non-specific thermal damage that we don't see with micro-needling, as well as the actual hole created, to give the results that we see with our lasers. Actually, the newer micro-needling machines from Europe do use some RF so it is causing the non-specific heat, not the laser heat, so do we need the laser energy itself, or do we need just heat itself? Good questions and Dr Lycka is sure Dr Fabi is going to answer those in the next couple of years.

So where do you think this is all going, Dr Fabi?

The future looks bright and that we are exploring different energy forms beyond light, now radio frequency, now ultrasound energy – and now into micro-needling, something as simple with just a mechanical injury not even the addition of RF. We are finding different ways to, in a very controlled way, to injure the skin so that we can get new collagen production and also use these holes, these channels that these technologies create to drive product down, whether it is someone's own growth factors or synthetic growth factors. So the future is exciting and she is curious to see what is going to happen.

Dr Lycka sees a kinder, gentler way with less complications, and even better results with less downtime – that is where he thinks the whole industry is going.

And both Doctors agree that patients will appreciate it – we see year by year, from survey data that patients do not want downtime, even if it means sub-standard results, patients are just not willing to undergo the downtime.

Thank you Dr Fabi, once again for your information and sharing your time with us, so willingly, and you are so generous in doing so.

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