

Exilis from BTL Offers Unique RF Platform for Both Face and Body

By Bob Kronemyer, Associate Editor

Aesthetic practices seeking the next significant advancement in radiofrequency (RF) technology for body shaping and skin tightening need look no further than Exilis from BTL Aesthetics, Inc. (Columbia, S.C.). Exilis's evolutionary Energy Flow Control (EFC) system aims at redefining RF by delivering the maximum thermal effect to tissue in the shortest period of time, while ensuring unsurpassed safety, comfort and energy control.

Exilis, which received FDA clearance for treating wrinkles in 2009, also features one of the most sophisticated RF handpieces on the market. Real-time monitoring of skin temperature allows the operator complete visual control. Additionally, power and cooling are easily monitored and adjusted directly on the touchscreen of the applicator. Focused around eliminating risk and discomfort, the applicator possesses two major visible safety meters that respectively indicate good ground electrode contact and the quality of the applicator tip to skin contact.

In addition, Exilis uses the same applicator for both body contouring and skin laxity. This is accomplished by first deep heating with concomitant cooling for body shaping, then decreasing the cooling to heat the skin more superficially for laxity. The economics of the device are also appealing, as there are no consumables.

"I'm excited that Exilis allows us to easily treat the patient. It is also relatively painless, thus no local anesthesia is required, and there is no downtime," said Kenneth Rothaus, M.D., a plastic surgeon in private practice in Manhattan, N.Y. "Perhaps most importantly, results appear to be impressive."



Kenneth Rothaus, M.D.
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Dr. Rothaus, who is also an assistant clinical professor of surgery at New York Presbyterian Hospital - Weill Cornell Medical Center (New York, N.Y.), believes Exilis represents an improvement over existing RF medical products. "This is a monopolar device as opposed to bi-polar, which I think is noteworthy if you are going to achieve more extensive bulk heating of the subcutaneous tissues," he said. "Overall, I believe monopolar is better for aesthetics than bi-polar, unless you are treating a really superficial area. Since bi-polar RF contains both a transmitter and receiver in the same handpiece, you cannot penetrate very deep nor treat larger areas." Data indicates that bi-polar is limited to a depth of 8 or 9 mm, compared to over 2.5 cm for monopolar, which is more than twice as deep.

Furthermore, the Exilis system avoids "problems with peak power levels and the resultant pain and potential complications that have troubled us with other devices," Dr. Rothaus pointed



Face and submental region before Tx



Face and submental region after four Exilis treatments
Photos courtesy of Peter Hajduk, M.D.



Abdomen before Tx



Abdomen after four Exilis treatments
Photos courtesy of Lisa Zdinak, M.D.



Arm before Tx



Arm after four Exilis treatments
Photos courtesy of Peter Hajduk, M.D.

out. "If you have a traditional unipolar or bi-polar system and lose proper contact with the skin while the machine is still emitting power the energy can jump off from the handpiece to the skin. This creates a condition similar to an arc, which is painful for the patient and can cause a blister or a burn." Conversely, Exilis immediately senses when the handpiece leaves the skin, and turns the power down. By providing this constant monitoring, Exilis virtually eliminates problems with arcing, pain, blistering and potential burns. "Basically, the patients and my staff are much more relaxed now," Dr. Rothaus said.

Dr. Rothaus chose Exilis for his practice because patients found treatments comfortable. "Other RF devices we tried were painful," he related. "I also appreciate the continuous readout of temperature on the body handpiece."

For facial and neck tightening, patients schedule a treatment once every seven to ten days, for a total of three to four sessions. "The whole neck takes between 10 and 20 minutes, whereas the face ranges from 15 to 30 minutes. The average patient is here for about a half hour," Dr. Rothaus said. "My patients describe the comfort level as a hot stone massage. Many people find treatment soothing. However, there are occasions when the temperature becomes too hot or warm for a particular patient, so we reduce the energy level accordingly. However, not a single patient has requested anesthesia and no patient has failed to return for additional sessions. In fact, patients come back enthusiastic and ask for other areas to be treated and they are recommending friends."

Dr. Rothaus first treated one of his nurses with Exilis, beginning in June. "We're

telling patients that it will be three to six months before optimal results, but at one month, with four treatments, the nurse achieved an incredible result," he said. "Her submental region has gone from being convex to being concave, and her mandible, which was sort of obscured, is now well defined."

Abdomen, obliques, thighs and upper arms are four popular off-face indications that Dr. Rothaus has treated with Exilis. "A 5" x 7" area usually takes about four to five minutes to treat," he said.



Lisa Zdinak, M.D.
Cosmetic Laser Surgeon
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Lisa Zdinak, M.D., a cosmetic laser surgeon in private practice in New York City, N.Y., likes that she can completely delegate Exilis treatment to her staff. "It is not a procedure that the physician has to perform," she said. "It is very easy to use and it is very easy to learn how to use." Dr. Rothaus reinforced that the procedure can easily be performed by a nurse. "Furthermore, a good nurse or a skilled laser practitioner can learn this in a very short time," he said.

With a digital thermometer in the handpiece, Exilis provides continuous

“With Exilis we are not constricted by the structure of the device so we can treat virtually anywhere on the body.”



Before Tx



After four treatments

Photos courtesy of Peter Hajduk, M.D.

feedback as to the temperature of the skin's surface at all times, thus increasing safety. “Exilis is also one of the few RF devices where if you lose full contact with the skin, the machine will shut off, so there is no risk of any uneven contact with the skin,” Dr. Zdinak reiterated.

Treatment is quick, too. “Patients love the fact that it takes only 10 to 15 minutes to treat an area, without having to experience the discomfort of some other competing technologies,” Dr. Zdinak stated. Furthermore, Exilis is exceptionally versatile in treating different areas of the body, in part because of the size of the handpiece. “It was very well configured to be ergonomically adaptable to the contours of the body, compared to other technologies that primarily have flat surfaces,” she said. “This allows you to maintain a rigid control of the delivery of RF energy.”

Heating of the deeper tissues is accomplished by leaving the cooling on. “You can then turn off the cooling to treat laxity,” Dr. Zdinak explained. “With RF alone, you can achieve both body contouring and skin tightening, which is something that is unique to Exilis. Normally, you would need to use two different systems.”

Patients schedule four sessions, two weeks apart. “However, I’m seeing noticeable results after one session versus other technologies where you have to wait,” said Dr. Zdinak, who has been using Exilis over the past nine months. Major changes in body contouring and skin tightening occur after the first and second treatment session “and are maintainable, whereas with other technologies you have to wait anywhere from six weeks to three months before you see noticeable results. Patients really appreciate

the noticeable results in as little as two weeks with Exilis.”

Although Dr. Zdinak has been very pleased with the results, “it really doesn’t matter what I say, it’s what the patients say. The first person I treated with Exilis was a woman who conveyed to me that she knew she wasn’t going to lose any weight soon, even though her sister was getting married in London. The woman said she would be happy if she could just get the sleeves of her tops to fit slightly better. Two days after having her arms treated, the woman called back and asked if her stomach and thighs could be treated as well. Almost everyone who starts treatment in one area with Exilis invariably wants to add on other areas.”

Men as well as women like treatment, according to Dr. Zdinak. The favorite sites to treat in males are the obliques or “love handles.” Women typically have their arms, legs and abdomen treated. “Many upper arms have excessive fat and skin laxity,” said Dr. Zdinak. “I believe Exilis is the best device on the market for treating these two indications since it addresses both issues during the same treatment. The same holds true for other body areas, such as knees, abdomen and bra fat.”

A few of Dr. Zdinak’s patients had previously undergone cryolipolysis (freezing fat). “That technology is limiting in that you cannot treat all areas of the body because you need to be able to fit the handpiece into the treatment area. However, with Exilis we are not constricted by the structure of the device so we can treat virtually anywhere on the body,” she noted. “With cryolipolysis, this particular woman could only be treated at the belly button and below. She could not be treated from



Before Tx



After four treatments

Photos courtesy of Peter Hajduk, M.D.

the belly button up to her rib cage. When she came to me, the patient still had some fatty tissue in this upper region that she wanted improved." After three sessions of Exilis, the patient lost about 1.5" to 2" off her upper abdomen, "and she was still waiting for her results from cryolipolysis."

"Exilis is a good device because there is no disposable stream. It also requires little in the way of maintenance. Furthermore, the cost and the downtime to the patient is minimal."

Exilis also enables Dr. Rothaus to treat certain areas that might not be amenable to laser-assisted lypolysis, such as skin over the sternum between the breasts. "It can also potentially tighten areas on the face following a surgical face-lift, for example," he said. "If I tried to tighten the patient's face with surgery, I would end up with an unnatural look. Exilis is another tool to achieve a natural look in facial tightening and treatment of areas I simply cannot treat with other devices."

Compared to competing body shaping and skin tightening devices, Exilis "is quicker," Dr. Zdinak said. A 20 minute session with Exilis is equivalent to a session lasting 40 minutes to 2 hours with other technologies. "Treatment is also less painful with Exilis. Some other technologies are working at the sacrifice of patient comfort, so patients need to take pain medication beforehand.

With Exilis, no pain medication is needed. There is no discomfort with the gradual warming. You feel a deep heating sensation toward the very end, but by the time you feel that sensation, treatment is over."

As long as patients maintain their current lifestyle (activity and diet), "results should be permanent because we've seen the changes – compression of the fatty layer – in imaging studies," Dr. Zdinak reported.

Dr. Rothaus acknowledged that in the current challenging economic environment, "no practitioner necessarily wants to invest in a new device. However, Exilis is a good device because there is no disposable stream. It also requires little in the way of maintenance." Furthermore, "the cost and the downtime to the patient is minimal, relative to other procedures; therefore, it is a type of procedure patients are willing to undertake. Additionally, it is an easy enough procedure with a reasonable cost to the patient, so a follow-up treatment every year to two, it is very doable."

Dr. Zdinak further noted, "In these economic trying times Exilis is such a great investment because you don't have a huge capital outlay. Most aesthetic systems can cost tens of thousands of dollars, plus the add-on of disposables which can run thousands of dollars a month."

Dr. Zdinak predicts Exilis will be very well accepted by all physicians who are looking to incorporate a valuable technology to address the expanding body shaping and skin tightening opportunity of their practice.