

Ultrasound Therapy Shows Promise in Treating the Most Common Breast Implant Complication, Capsular Contracture

Tens of thousands of women with breast implants will develop hardening, discomfort and elevation of their implants, known as “capsular contracture”. In the past, asthma medicine, massage, vitamin E and changes in the types and surface of the implants have been tried with little success.

Dr. Donald W Kress, a Clinical Associate Professor of Surgery at the Milton S Hershey Medical Center and Board Certified Plastic Surgeon in Frederick, Maryland has been working with a custom designed ultrasound unit to treat patients with capsular contracture. He recently presented a summary of his research at the American Society of Plastic Surgery’s annual meeting in Denver, Colorado.

His study showed that ultrasound treatments twice a week for 3-4 weeks combined with a home massage program improved at least one of the symptoms for 72% of the patients and that 52% of the patients were completely satisfied with their results. Without treatment, the choices would have been to “live with it” or costly additional surgery.

Increasingly, Plastic Surgeons around the world are coming to believe that a type of infection known as a Biofilm causes most cases of capsular contracture. Current research from Australia and the USA also support this. A Biofilm infection differs from a traditional infection since it can be initiated by a very small number of relatively benign bacteria when a foreign body (such as a breast implant) is present. Bacteria living in a biofilm have the ability to resist traditional antibiotics and hide from the body’s immune system. It is theorized that ultrasound works because, in addition to it’s traditional role of softening and modifying scar tissue, it makes the bacteria in the biofilm more vulnerable to the body’s immune system.

Dr. Kress commented, “It isn’t a perfect solution, but I am very happy to be able to offer women with this problem a non-surgical solution which works over 50% of the time.’ “The final solution will probably be implantable devices which have the ability to resist the biofilm formation, but that is still a long ways away.”

The Ultrasound device was developed by Tim Weyant of Aspen Rehab Technologies of Coral Springs, Florida.

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