

The Mail

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For Information
write JOLEN
25 Walls Dr., Fairfield, CT 06430

Medical Response

Allure has done the public a service by alerting potential patients to abuses of liposuction and the tumescent method ["As She Lay Dying," by Mark Lasswell, August]. While tumescent liposuction has been a major advance in safety and efficacy and has benefited thousands of patients by reducing blood loss and pain, prospective patients should know the following:

- There is no such thing as "lunch-time liposuction." Liposuction is a surgical operation with potential risks and dangers.

- Liposuction is not an effective method of weight loss and can be dangerous when used to remove very large amounts of fat.

- There is no substitute for a healthy diet and exercise. If a patient is overweight, she should try weight loss before seeking liposuction.

Patients should choose their surgeons carefully. A surgeon's certification by the American Board of Plastic Surgery is an important criterion of training and expertise. Patients should go beyond board certification, however, and take the time to ascertain the reputation of their prospective surgeon within the local medical community. A surgeon who is respected by his peers is generally a safe surgeon.

If patients choose to be operated on in a doctor's office, they should ask if the doctor's operating room has been accredited. Accreditation by a recognized certifying body such as the American Association for the Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities (AAAASF) indicates that the operating room meets high standards of safety and sterility.

Gerald H. Pitman, M.D.

New York, New York

Shame on you, Mark Lasswell, for not thoroughly researching your topic so that you could tell the truth. The truth is that no patient has ever died of tumescent liposuction. This has been verified by well-documented scientific studies. The patient in the article, Tammara Cotton, died of complications from general anesthetic, hypothermia, and disseminated intravascular coagulation. I know

this because I researched this directly with the physicians who advised the coroner in this case.

Tumescent liposuction is performed entirely under local anesthetic without the use of general anesthetics or intravenous sedatives. The technique was developed to increase the safety of liposuction. When poorly trained physicians adopt this procedure and change it by combining it with general anesthetics and other maneuvers, it no longer is tumescent liposuction. I can only hope that you will be more careful in the future.

William P. Coleman III, M.D.

Metairie, Louisiana

Could it possibly be that the doctor in the article had an intellectual midlife crisis and abandoned all his training to do liposuction? More likely he followed the adage of bank robber Willie Sutton—go where the money is! It used to be that plastic surgeons completed an arduous residency consisting of five years of general surgery followed by two years devoted only to plastic surgery. Often after this, a postgraduate fellowship was taken to further refine the skills of plastic surgery. Now anyone with a marketing budget can get into the act!

Frederick N. Lukash, M.D.

New York, New York

Lasswell presents only one side of the story and gives no opportunity for dermatologic surgeons to quell the hysteria of the article. All the deaths and near deaths mentioned were deviations from the safety parameters defined by the developers of the tumescent technique. Tumescent liposuction with a maximum dose of Xylocaine of 55 mg/kg is safe and has been proved safe in thousands of cases without deaths. When you write an article on a procedure pioneered and performed chiefly by dermatologic surgeons, then you need to get the facts from them as well. The article is conspicuous in its omissions.

Harold J. Brody, M.D.

Atlanta, Georgia

This sort of journalism is of great value to your readers and is instrumental in keeping liposuction, when properly performed, a safe (*continued on page 66*)