

Local physician capturing media attention for fat-melting method

By Patricia Harris
of The Item

Township resident Marion Shapiro had been practicing medicine as an emergency room physician at Overlook Hospital in Summit for 20 years when she first learned of a medical procedure known as mesotherapy.

She had a friend who was an international attorney for a French company, and he asked her where in the United States a friend of his could have cosmetic surgery to remove excess fatty tissue in specific areas of the body. In researching the request, Shapiro came across mesotherapy, a technique that has long been used in France by celebrities and others as a weight reduction method.

She was so intrigued that she went to Paris in the spring of 2002 to study at an institute devoted to teaching the process first developed by Dr. Michel Pistor more than 50 years ago. Now, about a year later, she operates a busy practice in West Orange as director of Mesotherapy Associates PC. And she is garnering attention from national print and broadcast media, including a segment being filmed this summer by NBC's "Today" show that is expected to be aired in September.

"I saw the opportunity to bring something totally new to this area," the Winthrop Road resident said last week in explaining the change in her practice of medicine. She is one of approximately eight doctors in the country who practice mesotherapy, which is widely used in parts of Europe, including France and Great Britain, and in South America.



Dr. Marion Shapiro

Shapiro also said she was considering her family and wanting to take a step away from the arduous hours and workload of emergency room practice, although she noted, "I loved it. You have to know a lot about anything that can potentially be an emergency."

"I wanted to spend more time with my family," the physician noted, adding as an aside, "I doubt my husband would say the new practice has given me more time." She sees more than 150 patients a week.

The mesotherapy procedure, Shapiro explained, consists of injecting small amounts of medication into a layer of skin, the mesoderm, which then stimulates it to melt the underlying fat. That fat is then flushed out of the body. Weight loss can be dramatic, she said, with patients losing 2 to 6 inches in their girth. Women can often lose two full dress sizes, she said.

Shapiro said, noting that her patients report it is not highly painful.

The medications Shapiro uses are all FDA approved for their original usage, and she has made up her own solutions using American-made compounds.

The injections are given using a needle through a process called "multipricking." "The sensation is like a flick on the skin," Shapiro

The upcoming segment for the "Today" show is being assembled by the show's consumer reporter, Janice Lieberman. Shapiro selected three of her patients to appear in the piece, one to show weight loss, another to show spot weight reduction and the third to show cellulite removal.

The patients were filmed in late June as they were undergoing their initial treatment, and the show followed their progress by filming one at home, another in the gym and the third in the supermarket.

By the end of this month, the crew is expected to come back to the doctor's office to film its final part of the segment, and the patients will come back to discuss their results. In each case, the doctor said, the results have been positive.

"It was very exciting, Shapiro said of the filming. "The patients were happy to explain how the procedure has changed their lives."

Shapiro is the mother of three sons, Matthew, a graduate of Millburn High School, Steven, who is just entering the high school, and Noah, who will be entering kindergarten at Deerfield School in the fall. Her husband, Michael Saffer, is an attorney with the West Orange firm of Mandelbaum & Salsburg.