

Guildford clinic researches new technique that fights the flab

by Melanie Hall

A NEW flab-fighting technique that uses ultrasound waves to destroy fat cells to help shift those stubborn final pounds has been researched by a clinic in Guildford.

Consultant surgeon Mark Whiteley has just finished research on the new method, called high-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU), which uses high-intensity ultrasound beams to pass safely through skin and dissolve fat cells.

Over a period of three or four months, the body disposes of the dead tissue, and the fat disappears.

The technique was originally pioneered by a company in Germany around two years ago, which then contacted three clinics in the UK

to see if they were interested in using it.

The Whiteley Clinic was one of the three, but rather than just simply using the technique as it was, Mr Whiteley said that he was interested in researching it and developing it further.

According to the surgeon, the Whiteley Clinic and the company in Germany have since tested the technique on 23 people each, with the two other UK clinics testing it on about five or six people.

Mr Whiteley explained that HIFU is the only effective non-invasive, non-surgical method of removing fat, other than cryolipolysis, which freezes fat.

However, he explained that it would not be suitable for obese patients, but only for small areas of fat to allow body contouring.

"The key to it is that at the

moment, if you have got lots of fat in lots of places, you need to diet and exercise," said Mr Whiteley.

"If you have quite a bit of fat but in quite a few places, you can use liposuction.

"However, it's suitable if you have got a small amount, like a roll of fat around the belly or love handles, and you just can't get rid of them, and you don't want to have surgery because that's invasive and you can have scars.

"So if you are overweight, it's not for you.

"It's for people with a stubborn area of fat – they are pleased with their body generally, they just would like to lose a bit of fat."

Mr Whiteley said that one of the advantages of HIFU, which costs from £2,000 per treatment, is that as the skin is not broken because there

is no surgery involved, there is no risk of infection, although he added that the area would be a bit tender.

"It's tender because you are destroying fat," he explained. "If it wasn't tender, it's not working."

Mr Whiteley gave a talk on HIFU at the beginning of March at the Royal Society of Medicine in London, and he said that the results of the research are due to be published in a medical journal.

He added that although other clinics use techniques which involve lasers or other types of ultrasound, they do not work.

"The intensity of the beams are too low, it must be high intensity," he said.

"They don't kill the cells, they just harm them, so then they heal and take up the fat again."



Above: consultant surgeon Mark Whiteley. Below Mr Whiteley and his team pictured as finalists in the Toast of Surrey Business Awards 2011.