By Desiree Ifft, Contributing Editor

Backed by years of innovation, Thermage CPT from Solta Medical, Inc. (Hayward, Calif.) positions aesthetic practices to capture a substantial segment of the market—patients wanting a rejuvenated appearance without surgery or downtime. Using monopolar, capacitively coupled radiofrequency (RF) energy to uniformly heat the innermost layers of skin, Thermage CPT tightens collagen and stimulates the formation of new collagen, which reduces sagging and renews, contours and improves skin’s smoothness and texture.

Recent additions to the Thermage platform: Comfort Pulse Technology (CPT) and a vibrating handpiece, ensure not only superior efficacy but also a much more comfortable procedure for patients. The CPT energy algorithm intersperses cooling bursts with RF heat energy, simulating the Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation method of pain control.

With Thermage CPT, Debra Jaliman, M.D., who practices in New York, N.Y., and is the author of Skin Rules: Trade Secrets from a Top New York Dermatologist (St. Martin’s Press), has treated the faces, necks, hands, legs, periorcular areas and buttocks of more than 1,000 patients ranging in age from 20 to 85 with a selection of treatment tips that provides maximum flexibility. “In my experience, at this time, no other non-invasive skin tightening modality is as effective,” Dr. Jaliman said. “I have successfully treated many patients who ‘failed’ with other systems. With a Thermage CPT treatment, we see tissue tightening right away, followed by collagen production for six months.”

Dr. Jaliman said the only patients for whom she hasn’t achieved impressive results are smokers and sometimes, those with severe sun damage. “In many patients, however, an effective combination is a Fraxel laser treatment (Solta) to improve skin texture and Thermage CPT for tightening. Also, Thermage is great for someone who has had a face-lift and doesn’t feel it is tight enough, but doesn’t want to have another surgery.”

In general, Dr. Jaliman likes to have patients take Demerol one hour before the procedure, which allows her to maximize settings for the best results. “Patients tend to return requesting treatments on other parts of their body.”

Gregory A. Nikolaidis, M.D., of Westlake Dermatology in Austin, Texas, has found Thermage CPT to be more effective than light-based technologies he has tried for skin tightening, with less discomfort and fewer side effects than ultrasound technologies. He has used Thermage CPT on most body areas, including thighs, abdomens and buttocks. “It is the most effective non-surgical treatment I have tried for eyelids. Most of my patients tolerate the treatment without pain medications, perhaps just some Tylenol, and it is essentially a walk-in and walk-out procedure.”

When treating cellulite with Thermage CPT, he has found it works best for middle age patients where it also provides some skin contraction. Dr. Nikolaidis noted the treatment works wonderfully for patients with ethnic or darker skin types because, “the dermis and subcutaneous layer tend to be thicker, so there is more skin that can be heated.”

Dr. Nikolaidis expects Thermage to continue to play a prominent role in his practice. “This was the first technology of its kind, and it is now engineered to be very tolerable and more consistent than ever. I suspect the company will continue to be at the forefront.”