

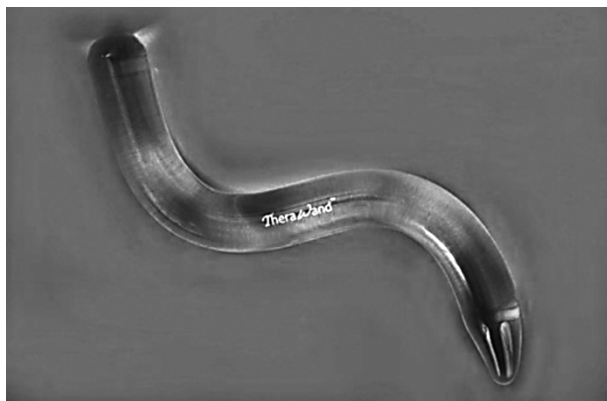
Product review

Essential TheraWand

TheraWand, Encinitas, CA, USA, US\$35.99
www.therawand.com

The Essential TheraWand is designed to be used by physiotherapists, massage therapists and patients to facilitate stretching, trigger point therapy and myofascial release within the vagina and pelvic floor muscles (PFMs). It is claimed on the manufacturer's website that the product is useful for PFM dysfunction, "i.e. pain, overactivity, shortening, trigger points" (Wiles 2013), and also vaginismus, painful scar tissue, tight vaginal opening and anorgasmia.

An S-shaped moulded Perspex rod, the TheraWand (Fig. 1) has a sharper, more conical



point at one end, and a blunter rounded one at the other. The product is described as a "crystal" in the teaching video (TheraWand 2014), but this is misleading since it both appears to be and actually is made of plastic!

I trialled the TheraWand on a patient in her late 20s who presented with defecation difficulties, dyspareunia and a history of vaginismus. She had a negative initial response to the conical end, which she feared might cause her pain. However, after a failed attempt to insert the rounded end of the product, she found that the conical end was easier to insert.

The basic biomechanics of the S-shaped curve worked well: the hinge point of the "S" was used as a lever to apply pressure to the desired area, which reduced potential strain when the patient was using the product on herself. However, a disadvantage was that, when using her non-

dominant hand on the contralateral side, she was less dextrous and found it more difficult to use. She was unable to achieve a similar level of pressure on both sides of her PFMs.

The patient stated that she felt more in control when she used the TheraWand herself, comparing her experience with a previous session during which the physiotherapist's index finger was used to maintain stretch. She mentioned that she found it "easier to relax because you know what's coming". This gave her more autonomy over her treatment.

She also found the design, look and smoothness of the clear Perspex appealing, and said that she could see the product being sold in sex shops as a toy. The patient also mentioned that she preferred the TheraWand to a set of medical-grade dilators that she had previously decided not to use because these were too "medical". However, she stated that she would be reluctant to purchase it because she believed that it would be too expensive: "Dildos from sex shops are a lot cheaper." The UK supplier StressNoMore (www.stressnomore.co.uk) sells the Essential TheraWand for £29.99. The patient thought that Ann Summers would offer a cheaper alternative with the addition of vibration, and that she could also use this with her partner.

A directly comparable device is the EZ Fit (IC Relief LLC, Tampa, FL, USA), which is another American product. However, there is currently no UK supplier for this, and therefore, it is much more expensive than the TheraWand. The EZ Fit can be ordered from the USA via the IC Relief website (www.icrelief.com/store/index.html) at a cost of US\$79.00 (if \$1.00=£0.67, then the cost would be £53.23+postage+customs tax). It looks similar to the TheraWand, but is made of glass. A unique property of the EZ Fit is that it can be heated up or cooled in a freezer.

In comparison, Amielle dilators (Owen Mumford Ltd, Oxford, UK) cost £53.99 per set from Amazon, and are also available on prescription. Therefore, the TheraWand is cheaper and may be preferred in some cases, which could be a factor in its favour for National Health Service patients. However, it should be noted that it is not possible to increase the girth of the rod.

Overall, I think that this is an excellent product for promoting self-management in patients with vaginismus and dyspareunia who have symptoms such as tightness and trigger points.

Angela Leung

*Highly Specialist Physiotherapist in Men's and
Women's Health
Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Foundation Trust
London
UK*

References

- TheraWand (2014) *Instructional Videos*. [WWW document.] URL <http://www.therawand.com/instructional-videos/>
- Wiles P. M. (2013) *Using the TheraWand to Treat Female Pelvic Floor Muscle Dysfunction*. [WWW document.] URL <http://www.therawand.com/instructions/>