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The Esthetician's Role in a Medical Office, Part 1

By Michele Phelan

The esthetics industry has come a long way since its inception. Although there are many estheticians who offer standard beauty services such as waxing, relaxing facial treatments and makeup, many aspiring estheticians attend a program and enter the esthetics industry in hopes of being able to work in a medical spa or with a plastic surgeon.

For these individuals, being able to work along with the physician and educate clients about medical esthetic procedures, as well as implement corrective esthetic services, is an exciting proposition that has become more prevalent over the last decade.

Benefits All Around

The advantage of a physician-esthetician relationship is multifaceted, as it benefits the client, esthetician and the physician.

Clients benefit because they are able to have all of their esthetic goals met in one location by a team of professionals. While working in their own scope of practice, these professionals have a great understanding and ability to effectively and safely administer esthetic procedures to the client for optimum results.

Estheticians benefit because they are able to use their expertise to help educate clients and provide them with services such

as lymphatic drainage, acne treatments and microcurrent. In many states, an esthetician's scope of practice will allow them to assist the physician in the treatment room and provide pre- and post-surgical facials to help facilitate the healing process.

Working in a professional, medical environment where the client is able to receive both rejuvenating treatments that benefit the epidermis, as well as treatments that work on a more profound level, is fulfilling. Having the opportunity to learn from the physician and their medical staff is the ultimate career path for an esthetician who is passionate about this area of esthetics.

Physicians benefit by having a knowledgeable skin care professional on staff. The physician's main objective is to focus on the medical health, as well as the beauty of their patient's skin. The doctor needs to know that they can count on the esthetician to educate the client about skin care, monitor an at-home regimen and provide topical treatments that are safe and effective, while also complementing invasive procedures.

Administrative Duties

In addition to providing skin care procedures in a medical office or spa, estheticians may be asked to perform both front

office and back office duties. Front office responsibilities may include answering the phone, consulting clients about procedures or preparing client charts.

Back office duties may include preparing injectables for the medical professional, sterilizing implements or sanitizing the treatment room. Of course, duties of an esthetician depend upon the needs of the manager and what is written into the esthetician's job description.

For the esthetician who is an employee of the clinic rather than an independent contractor or a commissioned employee, pitching in where and when needed may be a requirement, as it helps to contribute to the overall team effort. The role of an esthetician in the medical setting is defined differently for each office.

One thing that remains true is that an esthetician is required to always practice within the scope of their license. This is a legal requirement and differs from state to state, and it is the responsibility of all parties involved to verify they are following the rules. X



Michele Phelan, LE, RA, CIDESCO, is an esthetics educator and spa owner with more than 27 years experience. She has taught esthetics, served as a CIDESCO examiner, contributed articles to industry publications, and is the executive director of Concepts Institute of Advanced Esthetics where she teaches clinical esthetics.

Editor's note: Part 2 of this column series will appear in the December 2015 issue of *Skin Inc.*, and will cover the knowledge and training needed to be a successful esthetician working in a medical setting.

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The Esthetician's Role in a Medical Office, Part II

By Michele Phelan

For estheticians interested in medical esthetics, working in a medical setting can be incredibly gratifying, but proper training must be considered. First and foremost, basic esthetics training and licensing from a state board are required in order to touch clients therapeutically or provide beauty services to them. Although many medical offices will offer some hands-on training, they often prefer employees to have at least a basic understanding of medical esthetics, or to have worked in the field previously. These expectations are outlined here.

Structure, Function and Treatment

Having an understanding of the skin and its functions, along with the ability to analyze skin and recognize disorders, is essential. In relation, having at least a basic idea of the effects of nutrition on the body is important. Knowing product lines and being well-versed in how cosmetic ingredients work in the skin also will make an esthetician more valuable.

Equally important is a deep understanding of how skin care devices affect the different layers of skin, and knowing how to use these devices safely and effectively. Corrective treatments utilizing chemical peels, light-emitting diodes (LEDs), microcurrent, ultrasound and other regenerative modalities have become commonplace in skin

care facilities. Therefore, treatments that apply these modalities must be mastered by the esthetician and implemented with skill and expertise for the greatest efficacy.

Continuing Education

Bradley Greene, M.D., a certified facial plastic and reconstructive surgeon in the San Francisco Bay area, believes "Continuing education and the knowledge it brings sets apart not only the esthetician [from other estheticians], but also the office in which the esthetician practices from other medical offices."

In many states such as California, a medical office or medical spa is owned and operated by a physician or group of medical personnel. The physician's role usually takes precedence, as they are ultimately responsible for the patient. However, each member of the staff serves an integral part in ensuring that patients receive the best possible care.

To work fluently in the practice and interact effectively with the rest of the staff, estheticians should have a moderate or higher understanding of the following.

- Knowledge of the surgical and nonsurgical procedures performed by the physician.
- Familiarity with medical terminology, to properly document information and read patient charts accurately. Medical charts are both medical records and legal documents, so recording and communicating

information pertinent to the patient's condition is imperative for effective care.

- Understanding how to care for skin before and after procedures in the office as well as give recommendations for home care.
- Being capable of implementing corrective topical treatments in the office that may be administered by an esthetician.
- Understanding the importance of and processes for the three levels of sterilization.
- Recognizing basic skin disorders to refer the client to the physician when a suspicious lesion is detected.
- Being acquainted with topical and oral medications that may be prescribed to the patient.

Whether the esthetician works in a skin care facility, medical spa or physician's office, it is important for them to arm themselves with knowledge and technical ability, as well as master the art of people skills. This winning combination will advance them far in the field of esthetics. ✂



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Editor's note: Part 1 of this two-part series appeared in the November 2015 issue of *Skin Inc.*, and covered the physician-esthetician relationship, as well as the duties of estheticians working in a medical setting.