

MedEsthetics®

THE GUIDE FOR EXCELLENCE IN MEDICAL AESTHETICS

April 2024
Volume 20, Number 3
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Reevaluating HA Fillers & Patient Safety in Aesthetics

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- Sex Ed: Barriers to Vaginal Rejuvenation
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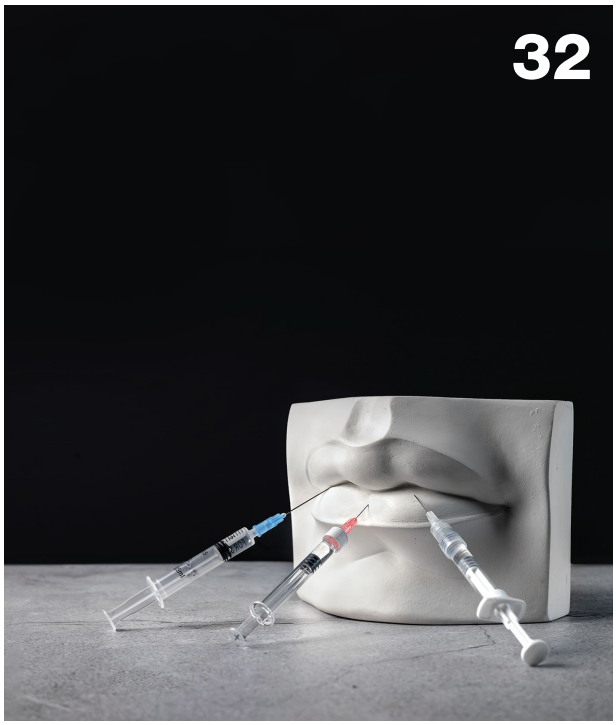





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Spring Skin Care Cleaning

It's time to do some spring cleaning for the skin, as the change from the cold winter weather to spring requires a few adjustments to our skin care routines. The basics of cleaning up your skin regimen for spring include replacing heavier cream cleanser with lighter foam or gel-based cleansers, in addition to using lighter gel-based moisturizers suitable to the warmer and, more importantly, more humid weather. One thing that stands out in the change from winter to spring skin care is the need for exfoliation. It's important to clean away the cobwebs, or rather dead and dull skin cells accumulated during winter, using gentle exfoliators to bring back skin's healthy glow. I find that including hydrating serums, particularly those that include antioxidants to protect against free radicals and environmental stressors such as sun damage as the days get sunnier, is another important element. To be honest, depending on the humidity, I might just use one hydrating product, as you can always use more if needed. Here are my favorite products to help your patients clean up their skin care routine this spring.





Skinfix's AHA/BHA Niacinamide Exfoliating Pads are formulated with 2% salicylic acid (BHA) + AHAs and niacinamide to target rough texture, spots, fine lines and acne-prone skin. These clinical-quality, alcohol-free, biodegradable AHA BHA, multi-level resurfacing exfoliating pads are perfect for spring skin care cleaning. They do double duty to unclog pores and brighten with lactic, glycolic and salicylic acids, as well as balance and refine the look of pores with niacinimide. Plus they are formulated to reduce fine lines and target rough texture, spots, keratosis pilaris and acne-prone skin. **Pair with Skin Barrier Restoring Gel Cream**, a lightweight non-comedogenic and non-acnegenic gel cream powered by niacinimide and Skinfix's patented B-L3 Complex to visibly refine pores, hydrate, minimize excess oil and help instantly repair skin's moisture barrier. Ideal for oily skin, this gel cream quickly absorbs into the skin, providing a refreshing and soothing sensation.
skinfix.com





Lira Clinical's PRO Anti-Aging Pads target dead skin buildup while brightening skin for a thorough spring clean-up. This cutting-edge product delivers the peel, peptide and probiotic experience with a powerhouse formulation that lessens the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles while beautifully brightening skin. Lira's Healing Peptide Delivery System increases barrier protection as it delivers exfoliation with less inflammation. **Pair with the PRO Retinal-Plus Treatment**, a triple threat product that engages the power of advanced delivery molecules, Hydroxysomes, plant stem cells and brightening ingredients to stimulate, re-energize and restore healthy, youthful skin. Compounds such as adenosine, resveratrol and retinaldehyde are stabilized, bringing correction deep into the layers of the skin. Use the **PRO Anti-Aging Pads** with the **PRO Retinal-Plus Treatment** to bring the radiance of spring back into your skin.
liraclinical.com



Skinbetter Science's Alto Advanced Defense and Repair Serum helps improve the appearance of skin dullness, redness and overall tone and texture. This super-potent antioxidant serum helps improve and shield the skin against the effects of internal and external free radicals, for brighter, more radiant-looking skin. Vitamins C and E, plus 17 additional free-radical fighters combined with a new, patented antioxidant technology (Pyrroloquinoline Quinone Allyl Ester (Allyl PQQ)), brings a new level of comprehensive defense, helping support skin's natural renewal cycle for energized, more rejuvenated-looking skin. A perfect skin refresher for your spring regimen.
skinbetter.com

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The Evolution of Dermatology and Aesthetic Medicine: The Neo Elite® by Aerolase

The dermatology and aesthetic medicine field is rapidly advancing, focusing on addressing common skin issues such as acne, melasma, hyperpigmentation, and the effects of aging. The introduction of the Neo Elite® by Aerolase marks a significant advancement, offering a comprehensive solution for these skin concerns with fewer downsides than traditional laser treatments.

What Sets Neo Elite Apart:

- 650-Microsecond Technology: Features a unique pulse duration optimized for effective energy delivery to the skin, targeting melanin, hemoglobin, and water for optimal absorption.
- Minimal Discomfort and Downtime: Precisely targets intended areas without excessive heat to surrounding tissues, ensuring comfortable treatments require minimal recovery time.
- Effective Treatment Outcomes: Provides precision in treatment, leading to high efficacy rates suitable for diverse patients.

Efficacy, Comfort, and Safety:

- Traditional Q-switched lasers have high peak powers but may increase the risk of skin damage and post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (PIH) in darker skin tones due to shorter pulse durations.
- Long-pulsed lasers may help stimulate collagen production but can be painful and require significant downtime.
- The Neo Elite, with enhanced energy delivery, offers a safer and gentler alternative suitable for all skin types, reducing the risk of PIH and providing rejuvenating outcomes with less discomfort and no downtime.

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CLINICAL EFFICACY IN TREATING SKIN CONDITIONS:

Acne: Targets inflammation and reduces sebum production, showing significant improvement in acne symptoms without topical and oral treatments' side effects and resistance.



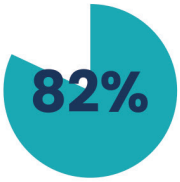
Reduction in mild-to-severe acne lesion count after 5 treatments and 87% reduction 90-days post-treatment.[3]

Melasma and Hyperpigmentation: Precise and controlled energy delivery breaks down the vascular network of melasma lesion pigment deposits effectively, with studies showing considerable improvement and higher satisfaction rates.



Melasma improvement after 2 treatments and without rebound.[2]

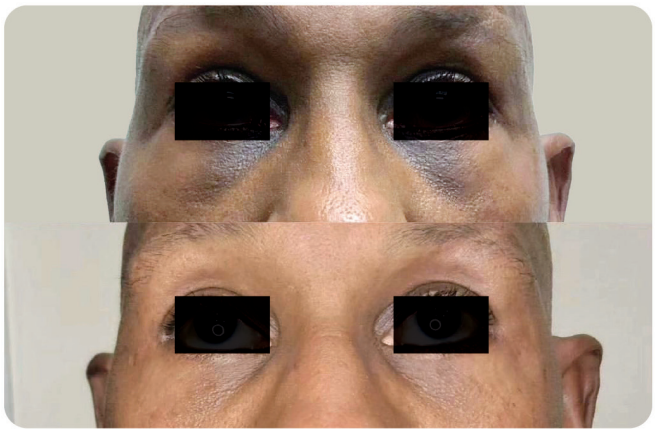
Aging Skin: Stimulates collagen production without damaging the skin surface, demonstrating significant skin elasticity and appearance improvements.



Physicians and patients reported improvements in acne scars, skin oiliness, skin tone and texture, and visible to excellent skin tightening.[1]

The Neo Elite by Aerolase represents a significant shift in medical aesthetics, offering a versatile, safe, and efficient treatment option for various skin conditions. Its 650-microsecond technology provides optimal energy delivery with minimal risk, setting a new standard in laser treatments and offering a compelling choice for practitioners and patients seeking effective skin health and rejuvenation solutions.

1. Dierickx, C. Exploring the efficacy and clinician experience with a 650-micro-second 1064nm Nd:YAG laser in acne management across diverse severities and demographics: A comprehensive dermatologist insight.
2. Journal of Dermatological Science. "Laser Treatment in Photoaged Skin."
3. Clinical Trial on Reverse® by Aerolase. "Efficacy of Reverse® in Treating Photoaging."



Hyperpigmentation post lower eyelid surgery - 4 Treatments
Photos courtesy of Camille Cash, MD



Acne - 1 treatment
Photos courtesy of Feel The Heal

Scan to find out more or set up a demo





Photo Courtesy of Bianne Bazzy, FNP-BC

LATEST IN LITERATURE

Wildfire-Related Air Pollution Stirs Skin Flare-Ups



Recent research published in *Dermatology and Therapy* examined the effects of air pollution in relation to skin health. According to the authors, in 2023, wildfires in the Canadian province of Quebec spread air pollution across the northeastern U.S. This aggravated health conditions and coincided with a rise in skin conditions such as atopic dermatitis (AD). Carbon monoxide levels measured by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the Boston area after the Canadian wildfires were collected by the authors from the U.S. EPA Outdoor Air Quality webpage. In addition, patient records of dermatology clinic visits for dermatitis and eczema at the Mass General Brigham hospital system, 300 miles from the wildfires, were examined. This data was compared with data from the corresponding months in 2019-2022 for historical control.

The researchers identified a notable rise in carbon monoxide (CO) levels, which correlated with a spike in AD, dermatitis and eczema-related dermatology clinic visits. They concluded that air pollution, exacerbated by wildfires, could damage the skin through the smoke as well as the chemicals used to extinguish the fires, which contain potential allergens and irritants to the skin, such as CO, particulate matter (PM2.5) and ammonium phosphates.

JAK Inhibitors Pose No Serious Risk of Increased Side Effects in AD Patients



Research conducted in August 2023 on the safety of JAK inhibitors found the incidence of serious conditions did not increase significantly in JAK inhibitors-exposed patients with atopic dermatitis. The study was conducted by researchers from Pusan National University led by associate professor Yun Hak Kim and their findings were published in the *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology & Venereology*. The systematic review and meta-analysis by Kim, et. al, examined whether the use of JAK inhibitors increased the occurrence of adverse events in patients with atopic dermatitis. They identified studies reporting the adverse events associated with JAK inhibitor use from Medline, Embase and Clinicaltrials.gov, among others for this study. They then analyzed the risk of 11 adverse events from 14 RCTs published between 2019 and 2022.

Their analysis revealed that the relative risk of developing herpes zoster, headache, acne, elevated blood creatinine phosphokinase and nausea increased among those patients with atopic dermatitis who received treatment with JAK inhibitors. However, the incidence of serious conditions did not increase significantly in JAK inhibitors-exposed patients with atopic dermatitis. Recent reports suggested that the adverse effects of JAK inhibitors may be dose-dependent, so the researchers also conducted a subgroup analysis of the safety profile of these inhibitors according to the JAK inhibitor type and dose. This analysis revealed a higher risk of acne in patients receiving upadacitinib and abrocitinib, although the increase in risk was dose-dependent. Higher doses of JAK inhibitors were correlated with an increased risk of acne and elevated blood pressure.

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Rise in Cosmetic Treatments Due to Social Media Trends & Shifting Perceptions



With all of the viral beauty trends about DIY, professional aesthetic treatments and skin care on social media comes plenty of misinformation. Doctors and industry experts are encouraging patients to do the research and check with medical professionals before trying new treatments they hear about on social media, and to only undergo enhancement procedures for themselves, not because of what is currently popular. Cosmetic surgery continued to grow in 2023 showcasing how minimalism and natural-looking facial enhancements are becoming the go-to for patients. There was also a significant amount of love for fillers, body contouring and BBLs.

According to data from the *American Society of Plastic Surgery*, the plastic surgery sector has experienced a 19% growth since the pre-pandemic times, including a rise in tummy tucks by 37%, liposuctions by 23% and facial procedures by 19% in the last few years. Nordesthetics Clinic, an international clinic in Lithuania, has seen a 10% to 15% increase in invasive beauty procedures in 2023, reaching around 3,000 yearly international patients, mostly from the United Kingdom.

Gediminas Samulenas, M.D., a surgeon at Nordesthetics Clinic, noted that there has been a notable shift in perceptions about plastic surgery, with it becoming more socially acceptable and less stigmatized. He also emphasizes that opting to undergo surgery should be an individual decision rather than one influenced by trends. Dr. Samulenas has also seen an increase in plastic surgeries in 2023 for procedures like mommy makeovers, tummy tucks, breast lifts, breast reductions and facelifts, which he attributes to social media trends. The plastic surgeon also sees an increased casualness in plastic surgeries, which could lead to excessive and unnecessary work.

Ozempic & Medical Tourism

Medical tourism is a growing concept in medical aesthetics, as well as the spa and wellness industry. A Medical Tourism Patient Survey revealed that 97.2% of respondents who traveled for medical treatment considered trust to be one of the most critical pull factors. For patients and health consumers, trust comprises transparency, clear communication about treatment costs and other charges, communication about their treatment, credentials of healthcare professionals involved in their care and a concrete medical plan when things do not go as expected, per the report. More than two-thirds of the survey's respondents identified accreditation as an important metric for medical travel programs.

Nordesthetics Clinic also noted that there is a surge in visits from U.S. patients, with many looking to address excess skin from weight loss. It is not only from Ozempic but also from traditional weight loss procedures like bariatric surgery and a tummy tuck. Mantas Kievisas, M.D., a surgeon at the clinic, emphasized that individuals undergoing weight loss, whether through Ozempic or other means, often require excess skin removal to fully realize the benefits of their weight loss journey. The doctor also noted that U.K. patients are also making the trip to Lithuania to address their skin concerns. According to the clinic, out of 3000 plastic surgeries performed there per year, around 800 of them are loose skin surgeries for British patients. Medical tourism will continue to rise, with a predicted CAGR of more than 29.29% from 2020–2026, per Arizton Advisory and Intelligence. Their report claims that medical tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing tourism sectors, playing a significant role in shaping the future of medical care worldwide.



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Consumer Trends: Minimalist Skin Care & Midface Treatments



Kline has released its Emerging Trends in Aesthetic Skin Care: A Consumer Perspective report, which features select excerpts from *Kline's Aesthetic Skin Care Consumer Insights* report published in November 2023 and the *Multi-site Skin Care and Wellness Destinations* report published in October 2023. According to Kline's report, consumers lean towards minimalist skin care routines that stick to the essentials and provide firmness and hydration. The midface is the most important focal point for non-invasive aesthetic treatments, and neck concerns like double chins and sagging skin were the least important point of focus.

The main consumer skin care goal identified in the report is a desire for skin that is firm, smooth, hydrated and glowing. While most aesthetic skin care users still have an adventurous approach, there is a growing popularity toward minimalism and simplified skin care regimens. Consumers are sticking to the essentials like moisturizers, cleansers, corrective serums and SPF. The most preferred ingredients are vitamin C, retinol, hyaluronic acid and peptides. Per the report, the mid-face is the primary focal point for non-invasive aesthetic treatments, regardless of age group or demographic. The upper face was the second most important point of focus, specifically forehead lines, wrinkles and temple hollowing. The least important aesthetic concern for consumers was the neck area, including the double chin, horizontal neck lines and sagging skin.

Semaglutide's Potential Uses Outside of Weight Loss



Lexaria released the results of the clinical study of its GLP-1 drug, which utilizes a DehydraTECH drug-delivery formulation and processing technology to improve both delivery and efficacy. Lexaria's studies go beyond weight loss to investigate the efficacy of GLP-1 drugs on kidney disease, liver disease, bone health and even aging, but the company's initial focus is on diabetes and obesity. The company indicated the final results just received from its first human pilot study of GLP-1 were positive.

The study was performed by a university research center that compared a control group receiving a single dose of a Rybelsus tablet to a treatment group receiving a matching dose of Rybelsus that had been formulated using DehydraTECH processing-technology enhancements. Per the study, 24 hours after administration, blood glucose levels in the Rybelsus control group were unchanged from baseline, compared to a 5.01% reduction for the DehydraTECH GLP-1 treatment group. The data showed the control group experienced a 21.7% spike in glucose levels after a meal, versus just a 6.2% increase in the DehydraTECH treatment group.

Lexaria's results showed that DehydraTECH-processed Rybelsus oral semaglutide was more effective at controlling blood glucose than standard Rybelsus alone. Rybelsus is one of the most popular drugs in the diabetes market, posting sales of $1.63 billion in 2022 and already posting $1.234 billion in sales during just the first half of 2023, according to the study. By comparison, Ozempic posted sales of $6.174 billion in the first half of 2023.

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Gen Z

It seems like every new aesthetic trend originates and spreads on Tik Tok through young beauty influencers, which makes it essential to your practice to know what younger patients are thinking. These insights from industry experts can help you stay on top of the latest trends among Gen Z patients.

"Gen Z has emerged as one of the most captivating demographics in the aesthetic world throughout 2023, rapidly becoming the fastest-growing injectable group in the United States. This generation continues to shape its aesthetic preferences, navigating the era of social media, selfies and videos. Individuals in the Gen Z population are increasingly opting for preventative Botox and structural support for their facial features. This entails various enhancements, such as accentuating the jawline and cheekbones, often complemented by the effects of the "weight loss revolution" or buccal fat pad removal. The result is a coveted V-shaped structure that resonates well on social media, a realm of paramount importance for Gen Z. Notably, Gen Z has embraced platforms like TikTok as their primary source for aesthetic inspiration and information. The desire to present an absolutely stunning appearance on social media is a prevalent and private motivation within this group. They actively engage in research on platforms like TikTok and other social media channels, further influencing their aesthetic choices."

—Johnny Franco, M.D., board-certified plastic surgeon and owner of Austin Plastic Surgeon

"It's abundantly clear that Gen Z is revolutionizing the industry with their demand for authenticity, inclusivity and transparency from companies as well as their products. We're seeing that when they're buying products, they're also searching for more than just the product itself; they're searching for experiences that resonate with those values and beliefs. This is reflected in their choices across several categories: from product packaging to pricing models, opting for gender-neutral and price-accessible products, to ingredients. Research has also shown that Gen Z consumers are more likely to support brands that align with their ethical and environmental concerns, opting for products with natural and simple ingredients rather than products with complex chemical formulations and unnecessary additives."

—Arleen Lamba, M.D., founder of GLO30

"Gen Z is growing up with a greater awareness of what is possible when it comes to aesthetic treatments thanks to the normalization online. Rapid advances in non-invasive treatments and technologies allow younger patients entry into aesthetics with very little pain and downtime, making it more attractive to a larger patient pool. Our annual AAFPRS stats show that Gen Z is coming into their own purchasing power and prioritizing aesthetics. The survey data supports this, showing that 77% of AAFPRS facial plastic surgeon members believe there will be a greater emphasis on earlier maintenance and prevention starting in the 20's and 30's to forestall signs of aging."

— Scott Tatum, M.D., facial plastic surgeon and president of the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPRS)

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Exit Strategy Planning 101

How to set up an exit strategy for your medical aesthetics practice.

If you have attended any of my talks, workshops or sales training courses or have read any of my blogs or published articles, you know that my passion and deep commitment lies in helping medical aesthetic practices run their business to ensure they have a more sustainable, efficient and profitable practice.

According to the Exit Planning Institute State of Owner Readiness Survey:

- 83% of practice owners have no written succession plan.
- 60% of physicians said they would retire today if they could.
- 49% have done no exit planning at all.

My goal is for you to be able to scale and prepare yourself for an exit strategy so that all the pieces are in place when you are ready to sell or retire.

I want you to ask yourself these questions:

1. Would you be confident that your business is where it needs to be to sell for what you deserve based on your current EBITDA?
2. How are your financial statements structured?
3. If private equity were to approach you today for a potential acquisition (and trust me, they are hungry, aggressive and calling many practices), do you know what your business might be worth?

I know that you are highly skilled as a provider, but you equally need to be a very savvy business owner who is not just working in your business but on your business as well. So, let's dive into the topic of setting your practice up for an exit strategy.

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Why the Sudden Surge in Private Equity Acquisition Interest?

If we think about the aesthetic business, it has been one of the only businesses that have been steady, recession-proof and even pandemic-proof to some degree, as we know many businesses saw increases and continue to flourish. Why? Because aesthetic medicine is retail medicine. Many private aesthetic practices have what private equity is looking for—recurring revenue.

Recurring Revenue Model

Just like Software as a Service (SaaS), many thriving aesthetic practices have a recurring revenue model such as memberships, loyalty programs and packages for procedures and follow-up treatments, which is why patient retention is so important.

Cash-Based Business Model

In addition to reviewing your financial projections, which must be very easy for a potential buyer to analyze, as a medical spa or plastic surgery practice, you have clients coming in paying cash on a regular basis. It is all cash-based and prepaid without having to wait for insurance reimbursement or money to come in, which is very attractive to private equity.

Aging Population

There is an ever-growing demand for aesthetic services/procedures, ranging from Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, Millennials and Gen Z groups. All these demographics are ultimately looking to feel good both inside and out. This business is not going away. If we look at the most current benchmarks, the average revenue for a medical spa is $2M per year and there is a lot of room for potential growth.

When private equity firms come in, they are looking for tremendous growth and opportunity. Since many aesthetic businesses are owned by non-business professionals, the potential for growth is usually unlimited. Whether you're looking to retire in 5 years or potentially stay on for another 10 or 20 years, going through a consolidation or an acquisition does not need to be such a scary thing.

Depending how you structure a deal, you may reap the benefits of dividends or be able to stay on under a partner arrangement for a specified period. A consolidation arrangement could help you with HR, offering benefits, payroll, hiring additional staff, marketing, finance, buying groups and purchasing additional equipment that can help you scale faster than doing it on your own. All of these are things to consider.

The most important thing you can do is prepare your practice now and create an exit strategy. That way, you have done your own due diligence and are ready for your business to be examined under a microscope for valuation.

Preparing Your Exit Strategy

Be able to articulate your story.

You must be able to answer these questions: Why do you have your aesthetic practice? How long have you been in business? What's your value proposition? What are you known for? I know that may sound silly, but the environment is so competitive and you are competing with multiple practices, so you and your entire team must be able to articulate your UVP. What can a client/patient expect when they come to your practice? How do you do things differently than your competition? Why do you do it better? Why should they come to you when Dr. Smith down the street is less expensive? Where are you today and where do you want to be in the future? Why should someone want to purchase your business? Why do you want to sell?

Start preparing 5 years before you plan to exit.

The time to start preparing is about five years out if you're planning an exit. There are three must-haves when you're thinking about your business in terms of supporting you with monthly calls to ensure your finances are structured appropriately:

1. A qualified CPA
2. A legal team with experience in aesthetics
3. A business consultant/coach with expertise in aesthetics.



Start planning your exit strategy 5 years ahead to ensure your practice is ready to be closely examined and it's value assessed by private equity firms.

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These team members should specialize in understanding the business of aesthetics, have proven experience scaling practices and understand or work with PE Firms of M&A Brokers.

Depending on what stage of life, career or phase of business maturity you are in, you want to be thinking about what your ideal future is going to look like post-sale. How long are you going to continue to work there? Do you want to expand or start another venture?

Know your EBITDA.

EBITDA is short for earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization. It's a widely used measurement of a company's financial health and the ability to generate cash. So, it is really the foundation of the valuation of your business and a rough way to ultimately determine your cash flow. When you're ready to sell, you're going to get asked tons of questions. They are going to pick apart your books and you must be able to understand your business. They're going to ask you questions regarding operations, systems, marketing, finances and sales and they're going to analyze everything.

Ensure your practice is in top-notch shape operationally.

They will assess, ask and evaluate: How do you hire your team? How well are they trained? How do you hold them accountable? Do you fire people? Do you have standard operating procedures in place? How many locations do you have? How are they performing compared to each other? What is your provider concentration? How many providers do you have and what is their breakdown of revenue? What's your employee turnover rate? Do you have a forecast? Do you have a budget? Do you measure KPIs? The list goes on and on….

It may seem overwhelming, but I promise if you are well-prepared and plan well in advance, you will be in the best position to get the highest valuation of your business.

8 Benchmarks Private Equity Will Focus On

1. *Top line revenue of $2M plus $500,000 in adjusted EBITDA.*
2. *Patient conversion rates.* Your patient conversion rates should be over 70%. How many patients do you have coming in? How many are being retained and what is the average lifetime value of your patients? It is less about new people coming in the door and more about how much they are spending.
3. *Most profitable services/procedures and mix of services/procedures you offer.* You want to ensure your profit margins are above 60%.
4. *Number of providers/sales volume.* How many providers do you have and what is your sales volume spread across those providers? In other words, who is performing what services/procedures and how much revenue are they generating?
5. *Staff utilization.* What percent of the time are your providers booked?
6. *Staff productivity levels.* What is your revenue per hour? Per provider? How many rooms are being used and how often are they being used?
7. *Business longevity and reputation.* How many years have you been in business? What is your reputation in the community?
8. *Tactics and strategies for revenue growth.* How do you plan to grow your revenue this year?



To summarize, if you own an aesthetic practice, I know you have a passion and desire to help people from a clinical perspective, but you are not in this to work till you're 90 years old. None of us want to do that.

Approximately 90% of aesthetic practice owners don't measure their data. Either they don't know how to do it, or are scared or feel like they are too busy. Data is based on facts, not emotions. You must know your numbers now to be able to make informed business decisions. Eventually, you are going to want to sell and understanding your data now will help position your practice for a future sale. ME



Terri Ross is a world-renowned practice management expert, thought leader, and international speaker in the medical aesthetic industry. She founded APX Platform in 2021. In 2023 after only two years post-launch, APX merged with Engage Technologies Group to offer a complete practice performance system, encompassing practice optimization and patient engagement. Terri now serves as President of Aesthetics at Engage Technologies Group.

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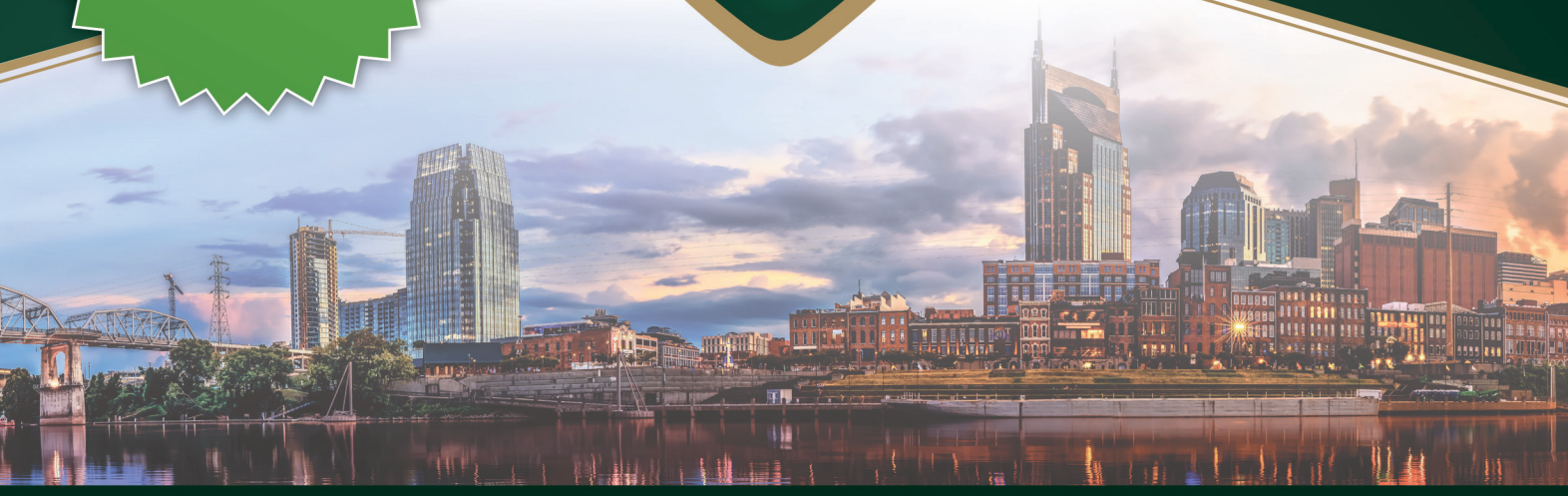

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OZEMPIC & AESTHETICS TAKE CENTER STAGE ON WALL STREET

There's money in looking and feeling good, and Wall Street has caught on the trend.

By Braeden Lichti



Background image by Nataliia Kovalenko from Pixabay





"Despite the growing popularity of weight loss treatments, there is a significant concern that has remained largely unaddressed until now: the loss of lean muscle mass."

Weight loss has taken center stage on Wall Street, after the mega successes of Novo Nordisk's Ozempic and Eli Lilly's Mounjaro. In 2023, Ozempic and obesity formulation Wegovy, generated a whopping $18.4 billion for Novo Nordisk, or over half of the company's total revenue. Eli Lilly's newer drugs Mounjaro and Zepbound brought in $5.2 billion in total. Wall Street analysts are projecting even greater sales from these weight loss treatments in 2024, which is drawing investor interest to the aesthetics and weight loss market.

The Issue: Loss of Lean Muscle Mass

Despite the growing popularity of weight loss treatments, there is a significant concern that has remained largely unaddressed until now: the loss of lean muscle mass. It's becoming well-known that GLP-1 therapies for weight loss can lead to the loss of lean muscle mass. In fact, past studies have shown that approximately 40% of the weight loss achieved with GLP-1 therapies can be attributed to the loss of muscle mass rather than fat. This is a concern because losing muscle mass can have negative consequences for overall health, metabolism and even aesthetics. Patients experience the "skinny fat" look, loose skin and stretch marks.

Solutions in the Pipeline

To get a piece of the sheer money flying around in this weight loss frenzy, drug companies are pivoting and trying different solutions to help address the muscle loss dilemma. One approach is to combine GLP-1 therapies with other medications that help preserve muscle mass. For example, Eli Lilly, now the largest pharmaceutical company in the world thanks to weight loss, made a $1.9 billion dollar acquisition of Versanis, a startup working on combining GLP-1s with a treatment that targets myostatin and activin, both proteins associated with muscle regulation.

Other publicly traded startups have followed suit to explore treatments to preserve muscle mass while on

From left: Image by Natalia; Svetlana at Adobe Stock





"Weight loss and aesthetics are at the top of investor's minds, and with the right investment, it's possible to support the development of treatments that help people achieve their weight loss goals while preserving their muscle mass and overall health."

GLP-1 weight loss treatments. Keros Therapeutics raised $140 million dollars. Scholar Rock raised $80 million. For Veru Pharma, the amount was $35 million. All companies are in early stages working on different approaches to this problem, but they share the same goal: to show that people can lose weight while preserving muscle mass.

Early Innings of Next-Generation Weight Loss Treatments

The development of treatments that address the muscle loss dilemma presents a compelling investment opportunity because of just how large the market is. In the US, more than 2 in 5 adults (42.4%) have obesity. As a result, there are expected to be many players vying for this market. Eli Lilly, with their acquisition of Versanis, has the first-mover advantage in the obesity – muscle preservation combination approach. However, that does not necessarily mean that they will have the best drug. It is still early in this muscle preservation approach, with the majority of treatments in early-stage clinical trials.

To prove to be superior to the first generation of weight loss drugs, like the blockbusters from Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly, these newer versions must address existing limitations, mainly tolerability in the form of fewer gastrointestinal side effects and preserved muscle loss. For now, biotechnology companies and the investment community have focused on the latter.

The muscle loss dilemma in weight loss treatments is a significant concern, but it's also a promising area of innovation. Weight loss and aesthetics are at the top of investors' minds, and with the right investment, it's possible to support the development of treatments that help people achieve their weight loss goals while preserving their muscle mass and overall health. There is money in looking good and feeling good, and Wall Street has caught on the trend. ME



Braeden Lichti is a founder of BWL Investments Ltd., and has served as its CEO since its inception in 2016. BWL Investments is a privately held company, which focuses on identifying public markets venture capital investment opportunities in high growth early stage companies. BWL Investment is a diversified firm that has identified and invested, through its principal owners, in a wide spectrum of global industries, including biotechnology, medical devices and medical aesthetics. Currently, Mr. Lichti is co-founder of ELEVAI Labs Inc., a vertically integrated medical aesthetic biotechnology company developing cutting-edge regenerative skin care applications for the medical dispense market.

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CELEBRATING INDIVIDUAL BEAUTY: A GLOBAL SHIFT IN AESTHETIC TRENDS

Celebrating individual beauty across the spectrum is the new aesthetic standard spreading across the globe.

By Rebecca Lane



Appreciating and understanding ethnic and cultural diversity in aesthetics

and the need to take those differences into account when it comes to celebrating individual beauty across the spectrum is a trend spreading across the globe. Recognizing the different beauty trends across regions, the diverse perceptions of beauty and the specific cosmetic enhancements individuals in these regions preferred previously in comparison to the emerging aesthetic trends that emphasize individualized beauty is paramount for aesthetic practitioners as the industry makes this widespread transition from one aesthetic standard to another.

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THE MIDDLE EAST: CULTURE-BASED TRENDS -HIJAB VS. NO HIJAB

Beauty standards in the middle east can vary in relation to wearing a hijab, according to Sahar Ghannam, M.D., Ph.D.[1] Women who choose to wear the traditional hijab tend to prefer the aesthetic of a rounder face with full cheeks, no sub-malar hollowness and no nasolabial folds. Since the hijab is often used to cover the entire head as well as most of the face, with an opening around the eye area, a slimmer face is less desirable when paired with the already slimming cover of the hijab. Greater focus is put on enhancing the aesthetics of the eye area, and the aesthetic look of wide almond-shaped eyes in particular.

The aesthetic trends of younger generations choosing not to wear the hijab are the opposite, tending towards facial slimming and sculpting. Enhancing skin quality and natural, individual beauty is the aesthetic goal, used in conjunction with injection techniques designed to create a slimmer, more contoured face. The overall aesthetic standard focuses on enhancing facial contours while also preserving ethnic variations and enhancing individual beauty.

FROM - Older Individuals/Hijab:

- Rounder faces with fuller cheeks, no sub-malar hollowness, no nasolabial folds ("pillowy" aesthetic trend) and focus on wide, almond-shaped eyes (only part of the face visible while wearing the hijab)

TO - Younger Individuals/No Hijab:

- Skin quality and natural beauty enhancement
- Face slimming, shortening/shaping and creating facial balance and symmetry
- Injectables and injection techniques focused on slimming the face ("snatched look")

ASIA: SOCIAL MEDIA & PHOTO FILTER-BASED TRENDS

Viral aesthetic trends related to the use of photo filters that dominated across Asia are giving way to a greater respect for preserving ethnicity and enhancing natural, individual beauty, according to Smith Arayaskul, M.D. Aesthetic trends across Asia are shifting from more exaggerated aesthetic changes to celebrating natural, individual beauty and preserving ethnic variations.[2] The perception of beauty is shifting from a preference for more westernized aesthetic looks made popular by celebrities such as the Kardashians to an aesthetic look that preserves and respects ethnicity while enhancing individual beauty. One aspect of this shift is the rising popularity of K-dramas, which highlight and celebrate the ethnic variations of Asian individuals, putting a spotlight on non-western aesthetics in the media.

FROM - Unhealthy Social Media/Photo Filter Inspired Aesthetic Trends:

- Meitu: Linked to body dysmorphia
- Snow AI: Distorts reality and can be used to change gender, age, ethnicity, etc.
- Foxy Eyes: Visually obvious cosmetic treatment trend designed to be noticed due to the procedure resulting in significant change to individual appearance
- Asian Male Aesthetic/Boy Love Aesthetic: Tall body, but with a very low BMI
- Prosthetic Makeup: DIY plastic surgery using prosthetic makeup to mimic the results of cosmetic procedures

TO - Celebrating Asian Ethnicity & Individual Beauty:

- Change in Perception of Beauty: From caucasian/ Kardashians to popularization of K-dramas
- Greater Respect for Ethnicity: Enhancing individual/ natural beauty and respecting ethnicity

BRAZIL: ENVIRONMENTAL & CULTURE-BASED TRENDS

Aesthetic trends in Brazil are heading in the same direction, with an emphasis on celebrating ethnic differences and enhancing an individual's natural beauty. According to Rossana Vasconcelos, M.D., one of the prominent aesthetic trends is having sun-kissed skin, with an emphasis on improved sun protection to ward off the aging effects of photodamage.[4] Natural beauty that requires minimal makeup is another rising beauty trend, focusing on enhancing skin quality using treatments to improve firmness, evenness, skin tone and radiance for a naturally beautiful appearance.

Dr. Vasconcelos points to the Brazilian festival of Carnival as another main inspiration for aesthetic trends, which highlights the aesthetic focus on achieving beautifully curvy bodies. Procedures to attain a sculpted body are

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tied to promoting wellbeing and self-esteem, with a strong emphasis on fitness and living a healthy lifestyle in service of enhancing body confidence and care. The controversial BBL procedure is going through a makeover in Brazil to improve safety and overall results. Physicians are exploring how to perform BBLs with minimally and non-invasive procedures such as biostimulatory and HA fillers to improve skin quality, reshape and reduce cellulite in the buttocks.[3]

FROM - Riskier Treatment Techniques & Sacrificing Skin/Body Health for Beauty:

- Tanned Skin: Lack of emphasis on sun protection, leading to increased photodamage/photoaging
- Original BBL: Original procedure can result in major complications and even death if not performed with the utmost care and safety measures.

TO - Revamped Treatments to Improve Safety & Preserve Natural Beauty:

- Sun-Kissed: Increased emphasis on importance of sun protection, improved product quality and formulations that protect skin from more types of UV rays, and encouraging individuals to wear the right kind of sunscreen regularly
- Natural Looks: Glowing skin, minimal makeup and natural beauty products, with an emphasis on using injectables (biostimulants, neurotoxins and fillers) to improve skin quality (firmness, evenness, tone, radiance, etc.) and aesthetic devices to stimulate new collagen (thermal coagulation)
- Carnival: Procedures to achieve the perfect body for carnival, with an emphasis on fitness, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, body care, etc., to promote wellbeing and self-esteem
- BBL: Revamping the BBL to get same or similar results using injectables (biostimulants, HA and fillers) to improve skin quality, reshape the buttocks and reduce cellulite

TREATMENT APPROACH CONSIDERATIONS & THE SHIFT TO INDIVIDUALIZED AESTHETICS

With this global shift to celebrating individual beauty, including ethnic variations, in aesthetics requires practitioners take into account the impact that genetic and phenotypic diversity in people of color has on the aging process, and thus, the need to tailor treatments to address these differences in facial aging to maintain patients' individual characteristics. Dr. Ghannam gives the example of differences in facial aging in middle eastern ethnicities. According to Dr. Ghannam, caucasian phenotypes with thinner skin have a tendency to develop wrinkles and fine lines. In comparison, the heavier face and thicker skin typical



of middle eastern ethnicities, comprised of a more compact dermis, does not develop as many wrinkles. Instead, sagging occurs in the face and eyelids tend to grow heavier and begin to droop.[1]

These differences in facial aging require different approaches to facial rejuvenation treatments that cater to the specific ethnic aging characteristics being treated, addressing facial sagging in this case as opposed to fine lines and wrinkles. Aesthetic practitioners are best served by utilizing their artistic eye when considering these differences, using an artistic approach to beautify and enhance the individual patient's beauty through a comprehensive understanding of facial anatomy and how to restore the structure of that particular human canvas. The shift to individual beauty in aesthetic standards across regions, cultures and ethnicities is ultimately leading the industry to take the art of medical aesthetics to new heights, challenging practitioners to truly understand the unique canvas of every individual patient and how to seemlessly merge medicine and art like never before. ME

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Rebecca Lane is the managing editor of *MedEsthetics*.



SEX ED: Barriers to Vaginal Rejuvenation Treatments

Access to vaginal rejuvenation treatments still faces unnecessary barriers.

By Tanna Donalson, P.A.-C.

As a medspa owner, physician's assistant, woman and mother there is no more frustrating area of medicine than the conversation around and underutilization of vaginal rejuvenation treatments. These treatments would be hugely beneficial to a large demographic of women, especially mothers. The barriers to accessing vaginal rejuvenation treatments are financial and societal. They prevent some women from affording the treatment, prevent medical professionals from marketing the treatment and make women feel too self-conscious to pursue vaginal rejuvenation. Expanding access to this treatment and making it easier to market would potentially help millions of women. Here are the biggest barriers to expanded access to vaginal rejuvenation treatments.

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Framing the Treatment as Cosmetic

Discussions in the media and among medical and insurance professionals constantly frame vaginal rejuvenation as first and foremost a cosmetic procedure. However, this isn't nor should it be the main focus of the treatment. Vaginal treatments are FDA-approved to treat sexual dysfunction and urinary incontinence, with the latter issue affecting 50% of all women and 75% of women over 65,[1] according to the Mayo Clinic. The Mayo Clinic also states that a majority of women dealing with urinary incontinence don't address the issue with their healthcare provider. The conversation amongst our industry and our patients should be centered around vaginal rejuvenation being an effective treatment to treat a condition that affects the lives of millions of women.

Our industry's willingness to label vaginal rejuvenation as a cosmetic or elective procedure is part of the reason why insurance companies feel like they don't need to cover it. We would never expect an insurance company to claim a bladder sling as an elective surgery for incontinence. We don't consider drugs used to treat male sexual dysfunction as elective. This double standard only exists when approving a treatment that helps women. There needs to be more advocacy and discussion about framing vaginal rejuvenation as more than a cosmetic procedure.

Financial Burden

Americans spend a lot of money on insurance and pay those premiums because they expect insurance to cover essential treatments they need to live a healthy and fulfilling life. However, if insurance companies are not going to cover any of the cost of vaginal rejuvenation treatments, then naturally it is going to keep some people who need the procedure from getting treatment. Medical professionals in a position to speak with insurance professionals need to spend more time advocating for insurance companies to pay for some or all of the cost of vaginal rejuvenation treatments. However, convincing insurance companies to pay is probably a more long-term goal.

Medical professionals who provide these treatments can work with patients to work out more pragmatic short-term fixes. Providing patients with payment plans, either ones your medspa or clinic provides or through a separate healthcare financing company, can be a good stopgap to help minimize upfront costs. I also recommend patients start a Healthcare Savings Account as a means to save up for the procedure with an added tax benefit. However, long-term solutions will require everyone in our industry to push insurance companies to pay more of the cost of women's healthcare.



"Vaginal treatments are FDA-approved to treat sexual dysfunction and urinary incontinence, the latter issue affecting 50% of all women."

Image by fotoduets at Adobe Stock



Many women still don't know these treatments exist or that they're approved to treat non-cosmetic medical conditions like urinary incontinence and sexual dysfunction.

Marketing is Unreasonably Difficult

Most people looking for a service are going to look for it online, which means digital marketing is essential in helping people find sources of treatment for vaginal rejuvenation. However, the moderation policies on social media remain unreasonably restrictive, with many terms being auto-flagged. Social media ads with the term "vaginal rejuvenation" are frequently taken down, and it is difficult to find photos that portray the benefits of vaginal rejuvenation treatments while still following TOS. Our medspa frequently uses pictures of a rose to convey our marketing message.

Moderation policy on social media makes advertising vaginal rejuvenation treatments on these sites untenable, and we have shifted focus to doing digital advertising on search engines as opposed to finding business on social media sites.

Many Women Don't Know Treatments Exists

The unfortunate reality about vaginal rejuvenation is that many women simply don't know that vaginal rejuvenation treatments exist. I have spoken to countless women who think urinary incontinence and sexual dysfunction are just something they have to live with. This means we as medical professionals need to talk more about these treatments. Incontinence often occurs after pregnancy, and our industry is great at helping expecting mothers but not at helping moms. There is so much care during pregnancy and delivery, but nearly zero education or resources devoted to treatments moms need after they give birth.

Medical professionals need to lean more into solving this knowledge gap problem. Normalize having conversations around issues that can be treated by vaginal rejuvenation. Talk about these issues with your patients, and talk about your experience if you have dealt with any of these issues yourself.

Vaginal rejuvenation is an essential procedure for many women and unfortunately, access to this procedure as well as the ability to market it is severely limited. The medical, insurance and social media industries need to do more to help expand education, access and marketing for vaginal rejuvenation treatments. Doing so will help millions of women in more than just a cosmetic capacity. ME

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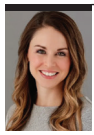

Tanna Donalson, P.A.-C., is the CEO of Redbud Medical Spa in Denver, Colorado. She has practiced medicine for over a decade and is an expert in restorative treatments such as skin and vaginal rejuvenation treatments.

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STANDING UP FOR PATIENT SAFETY



Tatjana Pavicic, M.D.

Tatjana Pavicic, M.D.: Reevaluating HA Fillers in Aesthetics to Improve Patient Safety.

Written by Rebecca Lane

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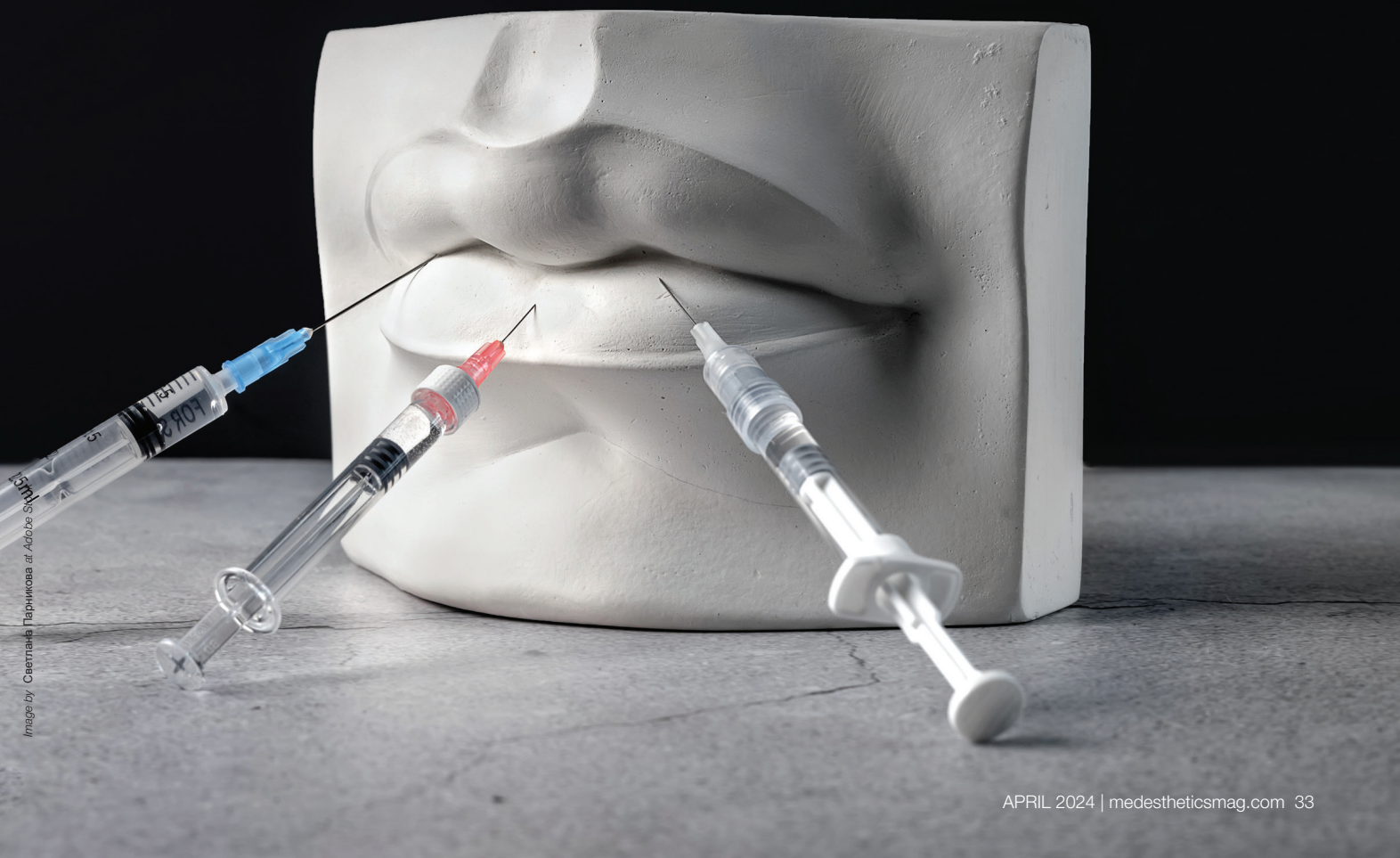
Tatjana Pavicic, M.D., a dermatologist based in Munich, Germany, is an internationally recognized expert in aesthetic dermatology, and injectables in particular. She launched her highly successful private practice on Maximilian Street in the heart of Munich in 2014, but started working with injectables near the end of her specialist residency for dermatology and venereology around 2007, when they were still fairly new in the world of aesthetics. Since then, Dr. Pavicic has watched the changes in injectable filler formulations and injection techniques evolve over that time. However, the lack of focus on patient safety when it comes to HA filler injections inspired her to become a staunch advocate for its improvement, leading to her speak at conferences around the world on this subject and stand out as a voice for change and improved regulation and patient education, particularly in relation to injectable fillers, in the aesthetic industry.



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Dr. Pavicic points out the advancement of knowledge around the anatomy of facial aging in aesthetics and the unintended consequences when the industry first started realizing that we lose facial volume as we age. She states that after this realization, practitioners, "would try to fix everything with volume, resulting in these pillow faces and overfilled lips." While on the one hand, knowledge is power, industry professionals in recent years have now had to course correct for this more simplified view of lip enhancement, redefining the proper safety measures and aesthetic technique for the utilization of HA fillers. The results of bad lip filler can vary depending on the severity of the issue and the specific circumstances. Experiencing overfilled or uneven results from lip fillers can be disappointing and, at times, uncomfortable.

Ensuring proper patient safety, technique and an artistic eye when using HA fillers to enhance volume, correct unevenness and overall appearance of a patient's lips or other area of the face is vital to providing optimal results and a positive patient experience. This is a treatment that all aesthetic practitioners need to make sure they are handling with care, as mistakes can have serious consequences and even cause tissue necrosis if the product is accidentally injected into a blood vessel. On top of that, the face, and the lips in particular, is an area that is difficult to hide if something does go wrong, meaning practitioners that want happy patients need to take the utmost care to treat the face safely and with an artistic eye.

UNDERSTANDING HA FILLER: INJECTOR TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

To elevate lip enhancement techniques and optimize treatment results with HA fillers requires the proper understanding of differences in HA fillers and excellent injection technique. Not all HA fillers are created equal, and each is only as safe as its user. Depending on the modification to the HA filler caused by differences in the manufacturing process, different HA filler gels have different structures with different characteristics. Understanding the differences in HA fillers and their individual characteristics is vital to knowing which formulation of HA filler is most suitable depending on the individual patient being treated (patient age, individual facial characteristics, skin quality, etc.) and what purpose the filler is intended for, whether that be the enhancement of the lips, jaw, midface or other area.

Part of this comes down to a need for better education and training in injectables and improving regulations for what type and duration of training is required to be certified as a professional injector. Dr. Pavicic states, "What I think is still missing is there are not many training opportunities that teach the aesthetic aspects of injecting. Somehow the topic of what is aesthetically desirable for the appearance of lips is left instead to social media, people that aren't qualified or prepared to thoroughly research this aspect of aesthetics and beauty standards."



More opportunities for better injector education and training regulations for certification are needed to improve and ensure patient safety.

Dr. Pavicic explains the impact of inadequate injector training, the lengths practitioners have to go to if they wish to be properly trained in filler injections and the complications resulting from individuals taking advantage of this lack of injector regulation. She states, "It's not just being a doctor; it's also being an artist. Since now it's available everywhere and to any doctor, and in many countries not even doctors, someone can take a mere 4-hour course and call themselves injectors. This is really dangerous, and that's why we've started to see so many complications. We need to create better regulations for who can be an injector. It's a must. It should be a subspecialization. Even if I'm a board-certified dermatologist or you're a plastic surgeon, you might learn how to reconstruct a face after trauma, but filler injections are not a part of the basic education provided. You have to take time out and/or travel to get it. Some doctors will invest a lot of time and money to get education – they will go to different courses, to different injectors to get sessions with different trainers, particularly when you move onto cadaver courses, and this is, of course, very expensive. Others – let's be honest - see just dollars in their eyes. They think, 'the more I inject the better, and I hope nothing will happen, but if it happens once, it's just one patient.'"

Not only is better regulation needed regarding the requirements to become a certified injector, but highlighting what different certifications mean in terms of a patient's ability to ascertain the specialized skills a particular practitioner has

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obtained through this certification, so patients can better assess if a practitioner is truly qualified to be an injector and ensure they are choosing the right aesthetic practitioner for a specific treatment. “It is very difficult for the patients to actually see what the certificate of a certain practitioner involves in regard to specific treatments. Just saying because I’m a doctor I know how to do lip filler injections doesn’t mean anything - doesn’t mean I should or that I am truly qualified - unless it is supported by training and actual experience. Board certification for instance does not mean someone knows how to properly inject or that they have the specialized training for it. It isn’t included in the standard education of these board certification programs, which is why this needs to be a special regulation,” explains Dr. Pavicic.

PRODUCT REGULATION: CHOOSING THE RIGHT HA FILLER FORMULATION

Different regulatory thresholds for HA fillers determine how well the formulation of HA is tolerated in tissue, and thereby how the filler should be used and what patients are the best fit depending on what they are interested in having treated. When it comes to HA fillers, and particularly in relation to their use for the enhancement of a sensitive area like the lips, properly understanding the differences between HA fillers and the injection technique necessary to provide optimal outcomes is vital not only for aesthetic purposes, but also to ensure patient safety and minimize the associated risks.

Every HA filler is different, and like other aesthetic devices and products, each is only as safe as the practitioner using it. The manufacturing process and how the HA filler is modified results in different structures of HA gel. Certain HA fillers may be formulated to be less malleable, while others are designed to be used in treatments where the practitioner needs a filler that will be easier to shape. Dr. Pavicic gives the example, “If the filler is too hard you can’t really shape it and it will be palpable and visible when I move my face, especially if I have very thin skin. These all require the knowledge to develop individual treatment plans because your face looks different from mine, my skin is different than someone who is 70 years old. The age of a patient can significantly affect their response to HA fillers, as they are more likely to last longer in healthy, younger patients. In this case, it is better to inject less and wait to assess the results before injecting more.”

A patient’s facial characteristics, such as the thickness of their skin, the anatomical structure of their face, the original shape and fullness of their lips and their age, all need to be taken into consideration when choosing the right HA filler to use for that particular patient’s aesthetic and anatomical needs. Knowing what prior lip enhancement treatments they have had is also necessary to identify the right HA filler to use for further lip enhancement treatments accurately tailored to that individual patient’s features. Each of these parameters must be taken into consideration to identify how well a patient will respond to a particular formulation and choose the right HA filler for their particular lips.

INJECTION TECHNIQUE: ARTISTIC EYE & AESTHETIC BALANCE

This is only part of the equation when it comes to HA fillers. An artistic eye is necessary to ensure you maintain the aesthetic balance of that individual patient’s face and their unique characteristics. Dr. Pavicic explains, “Even if you’re a very good facelift surgeon, the anatomy for injectables is a skill that is quite different. This requires knowing what filler to use for that area and patient’s individual characteristics, how well they respond to a formulation, where to put it, how deep, how much, how to shape something with an artistic eye, etc.”

“Even if you’re a very good facelift surgeon, the anatomy for injectables is a skill that is quite different. This requires knowing what filler to use for that area and patient’s individual characteristics, how well they respond to a formula, where to inject, how deep, how much, etc.”

This doesn’t mean just individually tailoring one treatment either. All faces are different, and they all age differently depending on environmental factors, lifestyle, genetics and more. Whether you are using HA fillers to enhance a patient’s lips or another area of their face, to preserve that individual’s beauty requires developing individualized treatment plans for each patient. Dr. Pavicic discusses her approach, “One of my main mottos is MMITP or multi-layered, multi-model individualized treatment plan. We need to have a plan as well. How are people going to look in 5 years? it should not be about going in for one treatment. This is what I see in a lot of people from seeing social media. They want their lips fixed for $200 and it doesn’t matter where. They will go from one lip shop to the next, seeing a different doctor each time. I must be honest; this is also not the type of patient I want to have.”



The simplicity of "one size fits all" mentality must be traded out for aesthetic balance and an artistic eye.

The medical aesthetics industry is moving further and further away from the "one size fits all" mentality, and patients are expecting more highly customized treatment plans. This is particularly true with the rapid technological advances in 3D imaging, AI, AR, genetic testing and more making it possible to tailor treatments to account for even the smallest details of a patient's particular facial characteristics and skin health needs. "I really want to develop their faces, and I always do before and after pictures using 3D cameras. I have patients that I started injecting 15 years ago who still come to me. To see how they look now, while they may have looked a bit younger 15 years ago, they still look like themselves. It's authenticity that makes them unique, and to give that back to patients or increase this authenticity, these individual strengths, and minimize the little imperfections that we all find in our appearance is why I'm so passionate about my job," says Dr. Pavicic.

A skilled, reputable injector will always prioritize patients' well-being and aesthetic goals and will never insist on excessive fillers or dismiss the potential risks associated with migration. Qualified medical professionals should help guide patients through the process to achieve their specific goals safely and effectively. Dr. Pavicic states, "That really takes skill that combines an aesthetic and artistic eye with all the medical knowledge you should have regarding proper technique and medical safety. I see people that look good, but their injector or practitioner is missing this artistic eye. It's very difficult to be taught this because for example, there are people who painting beautifully, but they only reproduce other paintings, so they are good technicians but not necessarily good artists."

Communication is a key aspect of this, as physicians are tasked with listening to what a patient may tell them they want in terms of treatment, but it is then the physician's responsibility to assess and translate what they are and are not saying into a clear picture of their aesthetic desires. Taking patient mental and emotional states into account can help in this endeavor. Asking a patient to explain how they feel when looking in the mirror (tired, angry, sad) can point to the area of their face they actually want treated better than what they may say they want fixed.

"We have to widen our artistic view, and you can't do this without talking to patients. In some clinics, I see patients come in, immediately sit on the treatment chair and the doctor will come and inject the same areas using the same amount of filler every time. That can't be good for the patient, aesthetically or medically," says Dr. Pavicic. She continues, "The treatment depends on how long the particular HA filler formula lasts, the area of the face injected, the level of movement in that area, etc. – we know that now. That's the reason why some patients have what I call "HA faces" if they have always been injected with the same pattern, same amount, etc. This is much simpler – like when you're in school and they teach you where to put the marker points for certain procedures - so these practitioners always follow the same process. This is of course very easy, but it can end up in a disaster."

PATIENT EDUCATION & SAFETY

Prioritizing patient safety in conjunction with an artistic eye for maintaining aesthetic balance using individually tailored treatments designed to preserve the individual beauty of the patient is what will ultimately lead to optimal results and loyal, happy patients. Of course, aesthetic practitioners are in a somewhat challenging situation when it comes to patient education. They must deal with the disconnect between the way patients view aesthetic treatments and the role of their practitioners versus their general lack of understanding of the very real risks of seemingly minor treatments such as filler injections, as well as the need to appreciate the proper medical expertise required to perform them safely and provide optimal results.

Dr. Pavicic relates, "In the end, I am a doctor, and from the moral and ethical perspective these are my patients. From the business perspective, these are my customers, and they pay well for the services I provide. So, you should primarily be committed to science and medical responsibility – for aesthetic treatments even more than with standard medical therapeutic care because it's retail through patients.

Image by Deen Jacobs/peopleimages.com at Adobe Stock

My husband jokes with me that I am the best hairdresser in the city because as I said, on one side there is the medical and ethical responsibility, but many patients take that aspect and us for granted. They also expect us to listen to them and remember their stories about what is happening in their lives next time, which actually helps strengthen the relationship between the doctor and the patient or client. These seem like small details, but we have to ask ourselves, 'Why do people go to a certain bar again and again?' Because they love the barkeeper. So, we have to be this kind of barkeeper, but with all of the medical expertise that comes with this profession. Of course, we have to teach patients that they should appreciate this medical expertise."

Looking out for the patient's best interest when it comes to aesthetic treatments is another key point. Sometimes telling a patient "no" if they are requesting aesthetic changes based on passing social media beauty fads is ultimately better for them and you than giving in to their demands. Fads change and your priority as their doctor is to consider what is best for enhancing and maintaining their individual beauty, which lasts their lifetime. This is what makes patient education another crucial aspect of ensuring patient safety when it comes to aesthetic treatments.

"It's really important to teach the patient that not every HA filler is the same, that they are basically all different. I had a patient ask me once how much 1 mL of HA filler cost. I responded by saying, 'Oh, you want to buy 1 mL of HA? I think the cheapest way is to look on eBay.' She was like, 'What do you mean? I want to be injected with it. I want to have 1 mL injected in my lips.' I said to her, 'How do you know it's 1 mL?' before adding, 'Oh! You want me as a doctor to inject your lips, not buy one syringe.' At first she was mad, but after reflecting on it, she said, 'Actually you're right.' She became one of my most loyal clients, but I had to shock her first to get her to start thinking," notes Dr. Pavicic.

Patients don't always realize what can happen and what they can end up looking like if they are not in the hands of a qualified professional who has both the medical and aesthetic skills to perform these treatments. This leaves practitioners with the task of communicating the value proposition of their professional expertise and how it leads to optimal results of filler injection treatments and other aesthetic procedures. This will ultimately lead patients to trust you to be their doctor, as they will know you are looking out for their best interest, which is what a good doctor is supposed to do.

"A patient will ask, 'There is a medical spa and they do this as well, so why do you cost double?' In response, you have to explain, 'Because I am going to make sure I do it right.' We have to claim that because we're not the loudest profession in this regard, but this is where we really should get up and say hey, we've invested a lot of time and money to learn how to do it effectively and safely. In certain countries filler injections are charged by the syringe, so of course injecting five syringes brings more money than if they inject just three. This is really what we need to change in our way of thinking. It's art and art is unique. This is the thing about art; it's not just about how much 1 mL of filler costs. This is something that injectors as well as patients, or the customer, need to know," Dr. Pavicic explains.



Injector and patient perspectives need to expand to understand injecting is an art, and art is unique and complex.

5 TIPS TO ENSURE PATIENT SAFETY

Dr. Pavicic sums it up beautifully, saying, "The two are inextricably linked. If you provide excellent patient care and results, you will in turn have loyal patients who choose you as their aesthetic practitioner." She leaves us with these **five important tips for ensuring patient safety** and optimal care and treatment results, as well as for fostering a positive and healthy relationship with patients based on education and thorough, open communication.

- Set realistic expectations and educate patients on avoiding comparing themselves to others.
- Encourage patients to ask about different brands and products. Educate patients on differences in products and why one may be more appropriate for that individual instead of another.
- Inform patients of any and all possible risks (filler migration, swelling/bruising (takes time to resolve), allergic reactions/infection, discomfort, etc.).
- Avoid over-exaggeration (over-filled lips) by not injecting too often in the same place.
- Educate patients about dangerous trends encouraged by social media and photo filters (can cause infection and damage to tissue that is far more difficult to fix than the initial treatment, perception drift, etc.). ME

Rebecca Lane is the managing editor of *MedEsthetics*.

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DETAILS BY NICOLE FRONTERA



The Natural Needle Lift: 40's & 50's

Refreshing your patient's face without a facelift in their 40's and 50's.

My goal with creating the Natural Needle Lift, decade by decade, was to create a formula that I could follow for my clients that was still customized to each person's unique face. People tend to seek similar results around the same age, but everyone is different and ages differently, so the Natural Needle Lift was developed to create a treatment protocol to address the signs of aging at each decade through injectables in the most natural way possible, working with the client's own face to maintain their natural beauty.

Facial injectables are never one-size-fits all, so this gives me the opportunity to be creative while educating the client on what we are doing and ideally maintaining a more affordable price for treatments.

The Natural Needle Lift 40's & 50's

Many injectables and anti-aging treatments were created for people in their 40's and 50's, although they are now used more often on younger women. Early 40's is the most common age people start to see permanently "negative"

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messages on their faces, which is what they're seeking to treat when they come to me for injectables. "Eleven" lines, or eyes that appear sad or tired are what leads people to perceive themselves as unattractive. This is why the goal is to lift the upper face and add lost volume to the lower face to create a fresh and youthful look. We're addressing the areas that are sloping down, and adding fullness and volume to the face, restoring the patient's radiant, youthful appearance.

Natural Needle Lift 40's: Addressing Negative Messages, Looking Like Yourself

When looking at a face that someone tells me they feel is looking sad or mad, this is often from the messaging created by forehead lines - either "eleven" lines, two small lines between the eyebrows, or "wifi" lines, the horizontal creases across the length of the forehead. To relax eleven lines, or glabellar lines, I'd typically administer neurotoxin in 5-6 points in the forehead surrounding them - right in between the eyebrows, to the left and right and above/at the top of the lines. For wifi lines, I'd lightly administer neurotoxin across the forehead. In both cases, this relaxes the muscles, resulting in a natural look. I prefer to be conservative and stick to the goal of just easing the lines to keep the forehead from expressing anger or sadness without meaning to.



Next, I look to see where the face looks older, tired or "dragged down" due to loss of volume in the cheeks, chin or along the jaw. For this, I use a bio-stimulating filler to add back that fullness and enhance the natural contours of the face. This will naturally stimulate our body to make its own collagen, replenishing some loss of volume.

Depending on how much the face has "fallen", if I feel like the cheek area needs an overall lift, I'll add 1-2 mini threads on each side to pull up from the chin/lower cheek area towards the cheekbones. Even if the face is just showing those early signs of a downturn there, adding in a thread can lift the tissue without adding volume. As the thread breaks down it will then regenerate collagen in that area.

To round everything out, I also will do a lip flip and a bit of lip filler to add back any lost volume in the lips. Slightly bigger, poutier lips feel young and sexy, and add to that overall "refreshed" look. The goal is to have a friend look at someone who's had a natural needle lift and have to ask what they got and why they look so good. They can't quite put their finger on what's changed, it just leaves the face looking brighter, tighter and if they were worried about those eyebrow lines or negative messaging, looking neutral or happier.

Natural Needle Lift 50's: Pre-Facelift Updates

When clients get into their 50's, they may have friends who have gotten facelifts or are considering the treatment depending on how they feel about how their face is aging. However, a facelift is an expensive, invasive treatment that not every person is a good fit for, or has the time and resources to get. For some women, depending on how their faces are aging, I may tell them that the results they're looking for will only come from a facelift, but when clients come to me with skin that has been well cared for in their 50's, we can often delay the need for a facelift with a combination of threads and injectables.

For the 50's, I'll do everything I do for patients in their 40's, but will often use more neurotoxin or filler, or need to add filler to more parts of the face, because of the volume depletion and resultant sagging that occurs in and after this stage of life. I like to lift first with the threads, repositioning the skin and some superficial fat pads upward. This elevation will help with the nasolabial folds, jowls and contour of the jawline. The amount of threads versus filler will depend on the patient. Patients with thinner skin will get less threads and more volume, and the patients with thicker skin will get more threads and less filler. This balance works with the patient's own face and will keep the person looking like themselves. I will also use my fillers to create a smooth, "airbrushed" look and give a more "filtered" appearance. This delicate use of filler will leave the skin looking smoother and brighter.

Using threads in particular are important at this age to create the most natural results possible, and beginning to use them at a younger/preventative age will create the best and most natural results. Lastly, adding some neuromodulators to the jawline, lower face and platysmal bands will additionally help elevate the lower face and slightly sculpt the jawline.

Ultimately, the combination of collagen-stimulating threads and fillers together will maintain the skin, but won't

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replace a facelift. The results aren't as dramatic nor are they permanent. However, the base for any aesthetic treatments should be well taken care of skin, so a Natural Needle Lift 50's will not only delay the need for a facelift, but also support the face and skin even if a client chooses to get plastic surgery later on.

Natural Needle "Eye" Lift & Emerging Products/Treatments

Addressing lines and loss of volume around the eyes is a different and more delicate process than the rest of the face, but it was something my clients were often looking for, so we recently created a version of the Natural Needle Lift just for eyes. Like the rest of the face, the under eye area can lose volume with age, giving patients that tired or sad, negative appearance, especially for people who have always had a darker or more sunken under eye area.

Fillers in this region can be very tricky. Many people are not good candidates for under eye filler, specifically those that are subject to water retention and frequent swelling to this area. Fillers in these patients can make the swelling worse. The tear trough region is commonly an area with very thin, delicate skin. Therefore, some hyaluronic acids can be visible in this region, showing a bluish hue, also called a Tyndall effect. I often prefer starting with a more natural approach, using platelet-rich fibrin (PRF) alone or in combination with PRF gel injected into the tear trough. This natural filler can lessen dark circles and add fullness back under the eyes.

As with most treatments we perform in my clinics, we love combination therapy, utilizing devices with injectables to create a more natural result. High-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) or micro-focused ultrasound (MFU) therapy is also performed to the orbital region and above the brow to lift and tighten that area. HIFU/MFU is a non-invasive way to stimulate the body's own collagen production. This dynamic duo will make for the ultimate collagen response. The icing on the cake will be to add some neurotoxin to the area, softening the dynamic wrinkles and leaving the area looking more rested. Adding this special attention to the eye area in conjunction with any Natural Needle Lift will brighten and "wake up" the eye area. It contributes to the overall goal of not looking "done", but looking fresh, bright and rested. ME



Nicknamed "The Queen of Injectables" by her clients, **Nicole Frontera** is the owner and lead injector of both Nicole Frontera Beauty and The Formula, both medical spas that prides themselves on offering the best care for its clients. As a board-certified esthetician with 15 years of experience, Nicole's offices are always offering the most up-to-date treatments. Her journey into beauty started in the ICU unit of a hospital, where she gained unique insight into aesthetics' ability to change a patients' life, and she still works as a plastic surgeon's first assistant. She is a master in the art and science of facial rejuvenation and is one of the top medical spa experts on the New York scene right now.

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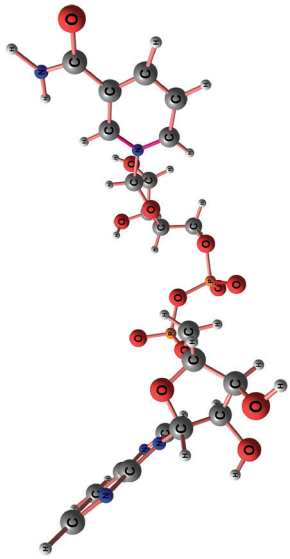

NAD's Cellular Influence Makes for an Anti-aging Powerhouse

The naturally occurring biomolecule has significant potential to combat signs of aging.

Addressing cellular functions is a key to maintaining healthy skin as we age. Popular skin care ingredients for aging like retinol increase cellular turnover to replace existing cells with younger healthy cells.

Influencing the key cellular functions is what makes the biomolecule Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (abbreviated NAD or NAD+ and sometimes referred to as nadide) an intriguing ingredient in ant-iaging skin care. Per the American Chemical Society[1], NAD is present in all living cells and consists of two nucleotides, one with an adenine base and the other with a nicotinamide base, which are joined by their phosphate groups.

NAD levels rapidly decline with age, which can contribute to fatigue, inflammation, illness and deteriorating health. As a vital source of energy within the cell, NAD supports healthy aging by encouraging balanced biological reactions.

According to a 2020 Study[2], "NAD+ can directly and indirectly influence many key cellular functions, including metabolic pathways, DNA repair, chromatin remodeling, cellular senescence and immune cell function."

The ingredient is slowly making its way into mainstream skin care. Applying NAD directly to the skin cells has been found to increase the production of collagen, elastin, hyaluronic acid and keratin. To maximize benefits, experts told Pop Sugar[3] that NAD is best used in leave-on products like serums and moisturizers. Serums will have the highest concentration of NAD and NAD-boosting ingredients.

NAD is well tolerated by all skin types, but due to the instability of the ingredient, precursors and boosters, it is recommended to avoid using products with NAD at the same time as highly acidic or alkaline products such as skin peels, according to Eugene He, biotechnologist and owner of Invity, a Singapore-based premium science-based brand that offers a facial sheet mask infused with NAD.

Invity's SuperNAD Youth Activating Facial Sheet Mask aims to boost NAD levels, address three cellular root causes of skin aging—sirtuins, AMPK and ATP—and stimulate the longevity gene Klotho, delaying the aging process of skin cells.

Naderma offers a moisturizer that has NAD and snail mucin, another skin care ingredient growing in popularity. The Naderma NAD+ Daily Moisturizing Cream hydrates and energizes the skin with a powerful blend of snail mucin, NAD, antioxidants and probiotics.

Snail mucin is the gel-like liquid secreted from a snail. It has versatile skin care benefits, including hydrating, plumping skin and smoothing out fine lines and wrinkles in dehydrated skin. Snail mucin also has regenerative benefits and can help soothe the skin with its anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties. The ingredient is ideal for dry, sensitive or acne-prone skin, according to dermatologist Julie Russak, M.D.

Along with its potential in skin care, the American Chemical Society reports that David A. Sinclair of Harvard Medical School believes NAD+ has potential to be given prophylactically to prevent or reduce diabetes, cancer and other age-related conditions. ME

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Tony Scianna is the associate editor of *MedEsthetics.*

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Lip Care

Lips are one aspect of skin care that can get lost in the shuffle, but lip care is an essential part of any skin care routine. Lips are sensitive and can experience drying, cracking, sun burn and the formation of fine lines if not cared for properly. These skin topicals and aesthetic devices are designed specifically to protect and enhance lips.



C-Kissed Lips by The A Method is an all-natural lip balm designed to apply an occlusive layer to the lip surface in order to seal in moisture and shield lips from external exposure to damaging elements. It is formulated with a blend of ingredients, including beeswax, coconut oil and almond oil, to moisturize and condition lips with the flavor of sweet citrus.

Contact: 877.746.4407, theamethod.com



The **Neo Elite** by Aerolase offers an innovative approach to enhancing lips with unparalleled precision. The aesthetic device leverages a unique energy-delivery system designed to target the lips directly while meticulously preserving the surrounding skin's integrity, stimulating collagen production specifically in the lip area for fuller looking lips.

Contact: 914.345.8300, aerolase.com



Young Pharmaceuticals **LipAge** includes a dynamic duo of the Daytime Shield SPF30 sunscreen and the Nighttime Serum that contain powerful ingredients like vitamins C and E and peptides to rejuvenate the appearance of lips, providing youthful volume, restoring hydration and decreasing the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

Contact: 860.529.7919, youngpharm.com



TiZO **Tinted Lip Protection** offers lip protection without the use of chemical sunscreen filters. Using only titanium dioxide and zinc oxide, TiZO Tinted Lip Protection reflects the sun away from the lips, one of the most sensitive areas. TiZO Lip Protection features a gentle kiwi, lime and ginger flavor.

Contact: 800.332.5536, tizoskin.com

Images courtesy of Manufacturers



KOREAN SKIN CARE IS EXPLODING IN POPULARITY

Research from Fresha revealed that popular terms in Korean beauty like glass skin and dewy glows are experiencing a significant increase in online searches and social media presence. Online searches for glowy skin have exploded by 178% globally in January. TikTok has seen 9,000 posts with the hashtag #cleangirl and 206 million views from users in the United States in the past 30 days. The hashtag has accumulated 8 billion views worldwide overall. Social media users are searching to achieve the Korean beauty look, with the hashtag "Korean skin care" gaining 6.8 billion views on Tik Tok. Google searches also show searches for "Korean skin care" have exploded to an all-time high over the past five years, increasing by 258%, per Fresha.

UNFABLED RAISES $1.6M INVESTMENT

Unfabled has received a $1.6 million investment, which will be used to expand the consumer-facing platform as well as develop its in-house data science, a core element of its B2B offering. This latest round brings the brand's total funding to $2 million. Prominent investors joined the seed round including Morgan Stanley, Exceptional Ventures, Atomico Angels, Founders Factory, Chai Ventures, SyndicateRoom and 3 Sisters Ventures. Angel investors, the majority of them women, include Maya Ghosn, Shefali Roy, Elaine Groenestein and Fiona Pathiraja.



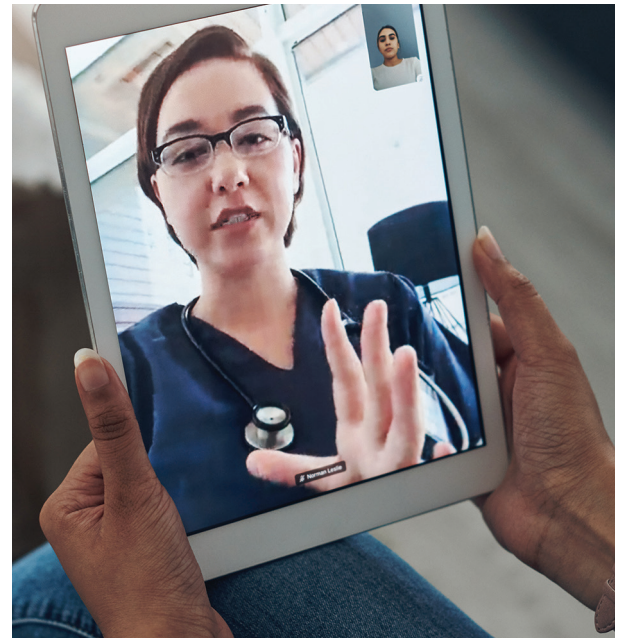
GIVAUDAN ACTIVE BEAUTY REVEALS PRIMALHYAL 50 LIFE

Givaudan Active Beauty reveals PrimalHyal 50 Life (INCI: Not Provided), expanding the company's hyaluronic acid ingredient offerings. The ingredient offers skin care benefits, including deep skin penetration up to 120 µm, stimulation of tight junctions, preventing TEWL, boosted skin hydration for up to 72 hours post-application, reduction of skin roughness and perceivable benefits in terms of skin texture, firmness and hydration. PrimalHyal 50 Life offers improvements across various environmental parameters, including significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, acidification and eutrophication of water, non-renewable energy usage and water consumption.

CYNOSURE PARTNERS WITH LASERAWAY ON POTENZA RF DISTRIBUTION

Cynosure has announced a partnership with LaserAway to significantly expand access to Cynosure's Potenza RF Microneedling system at all their locations nationwide. This partnership enables LaserAway to provide best-in-class RF microneedling options to hundreds of thousands of patients across the United States. Potenza is the world's first, four-mode radio frequency (RF) microneedling device, providing clinicians with versatility and even more customized options for patients and setting a new standard in RF microneedling technology.

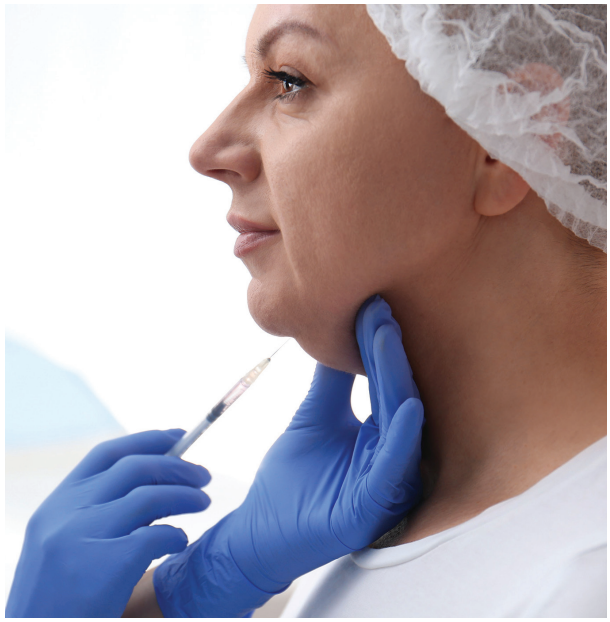
TELEHEALTH EXPANDS TO MEDSPA & GLP-1 TREATMENTS



Telehealth utilization in the medical industry experienced varied changes during the latter half of 2023, going up and down in October but rising significantly in November. As the industry adjusts post-pandemic, it's still unclear how big of a long-term impact telehealth will have. Regarding medical aesthetics, the expansion of telehealth has altered the consultation process and led to new programs that integrate telehealth into their offerings, including a new GLP-1 therapy program. According to FAIR Health's Monthly Telehealth Regional Tracker, the national utilization of telehealth services increased by 6.3% in November 2023, climbing from 4.8% of medical claim lines in October to 5.1% in November. Post-pandemic, the aesthetics industry has embraced the new norm of online consultations to diagnose and treat patients at a distance.

Clockwise from top: Image by SHOTPRIME STUDIO; Jeff Bergen/peopleimages.com; Cember Tech at Adobe Stock

GALDERMA RECIEVES APPROVAL FOR RESTYLANE SHAYPE IN CANADA



Galderma has announced that it has received approval from Health Canada for Restylane SHAYPE, a hyaluronic acid (HA) injectable designed for temporary augmentation of the chin region. It is engineered to build and shape on bone with deep injection for a bone-mimicking effect. The chin is a critical component of overall appearance that influences the balance of facial proportions, profile and shape. Genetics and age can impact overall chin definition, which may cause the appearance of a double chin. For decades, there has been a heavy reliance on implants to create structure in the lower face, with no non-surgical options available offering qualities close to an implant, per Galderma. Powered by the company's NASHA HD technology, Restylane SHAYPE has the highest G' ("G prime") of the Restylane range.

EVENTS

April 4-6, Toronto Aesthetic Plastic Surgery & Breast Surgery Symposium, Omni King Edward Hotel, Toronto, Canada, Contact: 416.978.2719, facmed.registration @utoronto.ca, www.torontoaestheticmeeting.ca

April 11-14, The Medical Spa Show 2024, Wynn Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, Contact: (312) 981-0993, www.americanmedspa.org

April 11-14, 43rd Annual Conference of the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery, Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, Maryland, Contact: 715.845.9283, www.aslms.org



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For the Boys: Facial Treatments for Gen Z Guys

Top facial treatments for Gen Z men from our resident *MedEsthetics* man, Associate Editor, Tony Scianna.

Most guys don't start a skin care routine until it's already too late. But Gen Z is setting themselves apart from the rest of us. Many Gen Z consumers stay ahead of the curve on skin health. Per Statista, Gen Z spends more money on skin care and uses innovative beauty tech devices more than older generations, often buying through online channels. Younger consumers are more social media savvy and swayed by influencers when choosing their beauty products. While younger generations spark trends, men are interested in skin care and aesthetics more than ever across several generations. Here are some facial skin care treatments I wish I knew about when I was in my twenties.

Facial Masks

Facial masks are a go-to self-care practice that provide intense hydration along with antiaging benefits. Some of the most common facial masks use kaolin clay or apply ingredients via a soaked sheet mask. Clay masks minimize pores and draw out impurities for renewed looking skin. Some of my favorite sheet masks use hyaluronic acid, vitamin C or glycerin.

HydraFacial

HydraFacial is a noninvasive skin resurfacing treatment that helps improve skin texture, tone and appearance. It combines cleansing, exfoliation, extraction, hydration and antioxidant protection that removes dead skin cells and impurities, while delivering moisturizing serums into the skin. The treatment improves skin health, addresses individual concerns and creates glowing skin. Unlike traditional facials, it's performed by a device rather than by hand.

Microneedling

Microneedling uses thin needles to make tiny holes in the top layer of the skin. The damage helps stimulate the skin's healing process to produce more collagen and elastin. Microdermabrasion is another option with similar results for young patients that want to avoid needles. Microdermabrasion uses a device with a rough edge to exfoliate the uppermost layer of the skin.

Chemical Peels

Chemical peels are a traditional way to stimulate collagen production and produce healthier-looking and more radiant skin. The dermatological procedures employ specially formulated chemicals or solutions to exfoliate and rejuvenate the appearance of skin. This process jumpstarts the skin's natural renewal mechanism, leading to a smoother, more youthful-looking complexion. Chemical peels are versatile and applicable to any skin type.

BBL/IPL Photofacial Treatments

Broadband (BBL) and Intense Pulsed (IPL) light therapy treatments are great for treating early signs of sun damage and aging. Light energy is used to slow oxidative stress and increases ATP production, boosting cellular function in the skin to speed repair and regeneration, leading to the stimulation of collagen, improved skin laxity and evenness of skin tone. BBL/IPL Phototherapy is a simple option for younger men wishing to address early signs of skin damage that can start to appear in their 20's such as discoloration from rosacea or sun spots, small facial veins, fine lines and wrinkles or uneven texture. ME



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Semaglutide's Potential Uses Outside of Weight Loss

With its ever-growing popularity, Ozempic is finding new uses outside of diabetes and weight loss.

Ozempic has sparked a new revolution in weight loss medications. Researchers are exploring new applications for GLP-1 medications, with clinical trials evaluating how the drug can treat heart disease, kidney disease, Alzheimer's and even male infertility.

Johnny Franco, M.D., board-certified plastic surgeon and owner of Austin Plastic Surgeon, predicted the Ozempic revolution in his article about semaglutide in *MedEsthetics*' April 2023 issue.

"Semaglutide and tirzepatide, the GLP-1 medications, are positioned to become the hottest medications in my lifetime," Dr. Franco said. "The impact of the medication has been truly transformative, initially for diabetes and subsequently at the epicenter of the weight loss revolution."

Dr. Franco points to the percentage of overweight Americans compared to the use of weight loss medication as one indicator of its predicted growth.

"It's interesting to note that despite the staggering prevalence of overweight or obese individuals, only a small percentage are currently on these medications," Franco said. "With nearly 70% of America falling into the overweight or obese category, I anticipate continued growth in this industry. However, the challenge lies in deciphering how to effectively manage patients in the long-term for success in their weight management while on these medications."

Clinical trials are underway testing GLP-1 drugs to treat Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and even drug addiction, according to Lexaria, which offers a GLP-1 drug that uses a DehydraTECH drug-delivery formulation and processing technology to improve both delivery and efficacy.

"Both Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk are actively broadening their portfolios, with more medications in the pipeline that promise even further weight loss benefits," Dr. Franco said. "Additionally, numerous studies have emerged, highlighting the positive impacts of these medications on various medical issues, including a reduced risk of coronary artery disease."

Lexaria's study was performed by a university research center that compared a control group receiving a single dose of a Rybelsus tablet to a treatment group receiving a matching dose of Rybelsus that had been formulated using DehydraTECH processing-technology enhancements.

Per the study, 24 hours after administration, blood glucose levels in the Rybelsus control group were unchanged from baseline, compared to a 5.01% reduction for the DehydraTECH GLP-1 treatment group. The data showed the control group experienced a 21.7% spike in glucose levels after a meal, versus just a 6.2% increase in the DehydraTECH treatment group.

"Given these advancements, it is likely that these medications will not only continue to expand their reach but also become a standard in preventive medicine in the United States," Dr. Franco said. "The growing body of evidence supporting their efficacy suggests a broader application beyond weight loss, paving the way for a significant role in overall health management."

Lexaria is planning more human pilot studies that are expected to test at least one additional GLP-1 drug as well as test an oral dissolvable that is not required to be swallowed.

With its growing potential applications, GLP-medications are set to have an even bigger impact on aesthetic medicine than they did in 2023.

"I believe that GLP medications are poised to create a paradigm shift in the field of aesthetic medicine, establishing themselves as a mainstay in ensuring patients achieve their optimal physical condition," Dr. Franco said. "Over the next 5 to 10 years, I anticipate a transformation in the procedures we use. In my lifetime, there hasn't been a medication with a more significant impact on both our society and health." ME



Tony Scianna is the associate editor of *MedEsthetics.*

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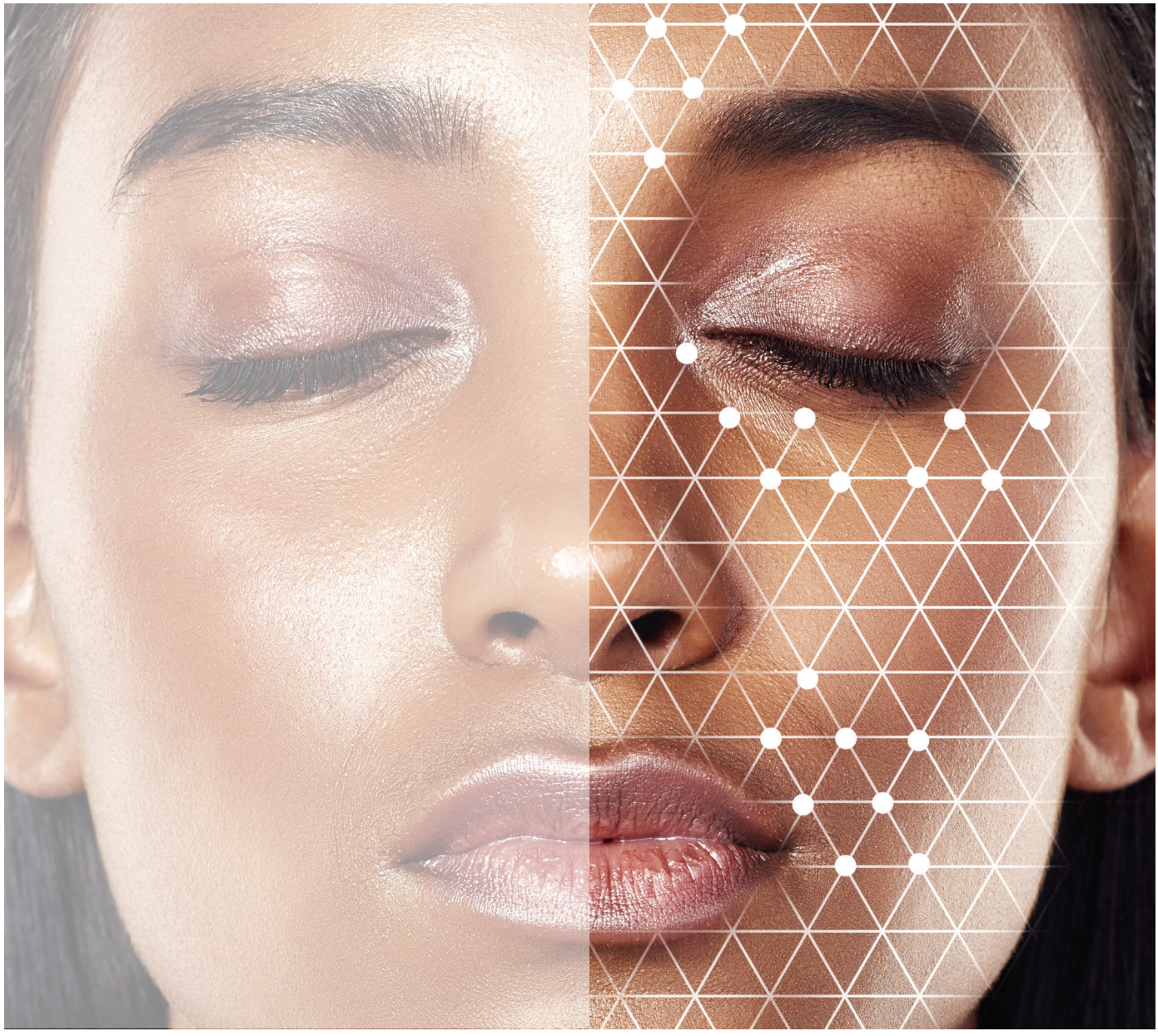

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