

Defining Roles

Medical personnel are growing more aware of the extent of an esthetician's training and realizing the potential value in bringing an esthetician into the medical environment. Working with a physician in a medical office or medical spa can be very rewarding for both physician and licensed esthetician. When an esthetician becomes part of the medical staff, it helps expand the business to include medical esthetic treatments and to offer long term age-management programs.

This chapter will focus on the licensed esthetician (LE) working within a medical spa or medical practice. It will also define the roles of the medical team within these types of practices, including the physician, physician's assistant (PA), nurse practitioner (ARNP, FNP), nurse (RN, LPN) and medical assistant (CMA).

In addition, with the prevalence and popularity of medical spas in recent years, essential advice about the medical spa business modality will be shared.

Licensed Esthetician (LE)

The word *esthetics* comes from the Greek word *aesthētikos*, which means to have an appreciation of beauty. An esthetician is a person who is professionally interested in the health and beauty of our body's largest organ, the skin.

Licensed estheticians (LE) are trained skin professionals who have a passion for learning elemental details about the inner workings of the skin. Estheticians study anatomy and physiology, skin analysis, cosmetic chemistry, cosmetic ingredient formulations, various treatment modalities including laser and light therapies, how to prepare and care for skin undergoing deep resurfacing or

other surgical procedures; as well as hair removal, massage techniques and makeup artistry skills.

In the United States, esthetic school is a trade school—a branch of cosmetology. As of this book’s publication, there are no national required standards in esthetic education. However, most states require at least 600 hours (approximately four months) of schooling before an esthetic student is allowed to take the practical and written exam for licensure. At the time of this book’s publication, the two official recognized esthetician titles in the United States are Licensed Esthetician and Licensed Master Esthetician (Utah and Virginia only). Although estheticians working in a medical setting may prefer the term “clinical,” no state issues a license to “Medical” or “Clinical” Esthetician, or “Skin Therapist.”

When an esthetician obtains her license, her choices for rewarding career options are numerous. Possibilities include working in a skin care salon, medical or day spa; running a solo esthetic practice; representing a skin care line; makeup artist in a salon, department store, or in the entertainment industry; salon or spa director or consultant; educator or school director; assistant to a dermatologist or cosmetic physician; on-site esthetician specializing in pre- and post-operative skin care; corrective skin care specialist or makeup artist for patients with burns or disfigurement; corporate esthetician advising research and manufacturing; beauty editor or writer; or freelance writer and lecturer.

Job Responsibilities—Esthetician in a Clinical Setting

For licensed estheticians working within a clinical setting, such as cosmetic surgery, outpatient clinic, hospital, laser center, medical spa or dermatology, job responsibilities encompass a variety of duties. A well-trained and experienced esthetician will help manage pre- and post-operative skin care and makeup needs, as well as provide a liaison between doctor and patient.

The role of the esthetician within a medical practice is an important one. As directed by the physician, the esthetician can reinforce home care protocols and



the proper usage of medications and help provide education to the patient. The esthetician may also serve as a surgical consultant, help develop a relationship with each patient and answer questions about procedures and communicate realistic expectations.

Estheticians are often a patient's first point of contact, as many times a patient will see an esthetician for services prior to seeing the physician. Since many skin diseases and abnormalities require medical care, it is important that the esthetician is familiar with recognizing, but not *diagnosing*, the difference between a potentially serious lesion requiring medical attention or one with *caution* abnormalities.

A typical day includes skin care consultations and analysis, assessing each patient's personal skin care goals and recommending a plan of action to reach those goals. If the plan includes surgery or laser resurfacing, the esthetician will outline proper pre- and post-treatment care to help the patient attain optimal skin health prior to surgery and to prepare the skin for post-procedure healing. This may include a series of microdermabrasion treatments, chemical peel treatments or deep cleansing facials prior to surgery, followed by skin soothing facials after surgery. She will also document the patient's progress with before and after pictures and record treatment notes in each patient's chart.

Often in a physician's office that has an attached medical spa, an esthetician will manage and run the product retail center, taking responsibility for choosing and selling product lines that best suit patient needs. In addition, the esthetician will provide makeup consultation services for post-procedure camouflage, if necessary. In a medical spa environment, under a physician or nurse practitioner supervision, a licensed esthetician may provide laser therapies, depending on the state regulations, such as laser hair removal, vascular-spider vein or intense pulsed light treatments (for wrinkles and pigment), and even endermology treatments (machine massage for cellulite).

In a dermatology office, an esthetician may be utilized as more of a medical assistant. The focus may be more analytical and clinical than in the cosmetic surgery or medical spa facility. Esthetician job responsibilities within this environment will include simple superficial peels, acne surgery, post-op wound care, photo-therapy and excimer laser for psoriasis, facial cleansing while the physician administers advanced peels, assisting during surgeries, performing extractions and ordering supplies.

Nurse (RN, LPN), Medical Assistant (CMA)



While not a requirement to obtain employment within a medical practice, employment opportunities are increased for the licensed esthetician if her medical education includes medical assisting or a nursing degree. At the same time, medical assistants or nurses who desire to work in a medical spa, cosmetic surgery or dermatology environment would benefit from obtaining licensure in esthetics in order to thoroughly understand the complexities of the skin.

Some medical assistants may be trained on the job. However, to obtain certification in medical assisting (CMA), one must graduate from a specific trade school or junior college and pass a nationally standardized test to become certified. The usual course is about eight months long. Medical assistants study human anatomy; physiology and pathology; medical terminology; administrative duties; laboratory techniques;

clinical and diagnostic procedures; pharmacology; medication administration; first aid; office practices; patient relations; medical law and ethics. They complete a practical clinical externship within a physician office. CMAs may be trained to administer injections and assist in surgery, including surface suturing.

The two nursing positions discussed here—Registered Nurse (RN) and Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)—sound similar, but there are substantial differences in educational requirements and job responsibilities. LPN training programs last approximately one year and include classroom study and supervised clinical practice. The majority of LPNs train at a technical or vocational school. All 50 states require that LPNs pass a licensing examination, and licenses must be renewed. Many states also require continuing education requirements for licensing renewal. These types of nurses may not give injections, sclerotherapy or Botox.

The requirements to become a Registered Nurse (RN) are more demanding than for the LPN. All 50 states require that Registered Nurse candidates obtain a nursing degree from an approved nursing program. There are three educational opportunities to a nursing degree: a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing (BSN), an associate degree in nursing (ADN) and a diploma. A Bachelor of Science degree in nursing is typically a four-year program. An associate degree in

nursing is typically offered by community and junior colleges and takes about two to three years to complete. A diploma program is also offered in hospitals that typically lasts about three years, but this type of program opportunity has declined in recent years. There is also now a doctorate given in nursing, although nurses with these degrees usually remain as full-time instructors at nursing schools.

Job Responsibilities—Nurse and Medical Assistant

Daily responsibilities of the medical assistant in a clinical setting will vary from office to office. In smaller practices, medical assistants wear many hats, from performing administrative duties, such as answering phones, greeting patients, handling insurance forms and other correspondence, to clinical duties including taking medical histories, recording vital signs, explaining treatment procedures to patients, preparing patients for examination and assisting the physician during the examination. Medical assistants also instruct patients about medication and special diets, prepare and administer medications as directed by a physician, authorize drug refills as directed, draw blood, remove sutures and change dressings.

Nurses working in an out-patient facility will prepare for and assist with examinations, assist in diagnosing and treating common illnesses and injuries, administer medications and injections, dress wounds, assist with minor surgeries and maintain health records. They cannot prescribe prescription medications.

In a medical spa, cosmetic surgery or dermatology office, medical assistants and nurses must understand and be familiar with medical skin care and peel therapies, medical facials and medical spa therapies.² The MA or RN will also assess the patient's skin type and conditions; recommend skin care treatment options; administer injectables such as sclerotherapy, Botox, and other dermal fillers; assist in surgeries; and perform facial protocols, microdermabrasions, chemical peels, and laser therapies.

Physician Assistant (PA)

Physician Assistants (PA) are found in all areas of medicine. PAs are health care professionals licensed or credentialed to practice medicine including prescribing medication with physician supervision, either onsite or by real-time communication. They practice in the areas of primary care medicine—including family