

Putting it into Practice— Choosing the Right Products

The Importance of Skin Care at Home

During the Great Depression from 1929 to 1939, when banking, farming and manufacturing failed miserably, the beauty business held strong and steady. In fact, the number one cosmetic sold during that time period was lipstick. The term *lipstick effect* describes the interesting phenomena that lipstick sales tend to rise during tough economic times.¹

With the aging baby boomer population, the esthetic industry continues a steady growth each year. Phototherapy treatments are expected to rise 1.4% per year through 2012. Body shaping treatments will continue to remain popular and expand at 21%. Botox® and other injectables will increase as well. Cosmeceutical sales are also predicted to expand 17.8% per year through 2012.²

An esthetic practice is able to offer a variety of clinical state-of-the-art procedures to treat many common skin conditions. But there is definitely a limit to the results your patient can expect after spending an hour or two every month on the treatment table. A significant contribution must come from care of the skin at home, either preparing for or maintaining, clinical results. Your patients come to you for guidance on choosing the right products for their skin care needs, knowing you will take into consideration many different factors beyond skin type and personal preferences. So how do you choose the best cosmeceuticals for your practice? What will work best for your patients or clients and complement the clinical treatments you provide? Does one product line cover all skin types and conditions, or should you invest in three or four different lines? In addition, does it make dollar sense to invest in a private label line that is unique to your practice or a branded line that is easily recognized and/or requested by patients?

The new ideal of healthy skin aging means that the skin care provider will offer a product line that addresses the points listed in previous chapters. Ideally, the products should:

- Help counteract the negative effects of chronic inflammatory factors and build the strength of the stratum corneum barrier.
- Be made with active ingredients that stay stable in the finished formula.
- Have optimal therapeutic concentrations of active ingredients.
- Have a delivery system to help the active ingredients reach the targeted cell receptors in the skin for optimal benefit to the health of the skin.
- Be backed by true, scientific “gold-standard” clinical testing for safety and efficacy of the formulation.
- Offering a professionally-formulated cosmeceutical line that meets these criteria will enable you to provide your clients home care that best complements their skin care treatment program.

To review, professional products that are available only through skin care providers generally have higher concentrations of active/performance ingredients, have a more effective delivery system, and must be recommended after a thorough skin evaluation and consultation by the skin care professional or physician. Keep in mind as well that *natural* or *organic* products are not particularly better than other types of product formulas that contain chemicals. In addition, the majority of cosmetics sold in department or drug stores, on the internet, or via multi-level marketing have minimal amounts of ingredients in untested formulas that rarely penetrate the stratum corneum and provide little, if any, therapeutic value. Your patient/client will be spending money somewhere on home skin care. Would you rather have her throw her hard-earned money away on untested products with questionable marketing claims or invest in something that you wholeheartedly believe in: products that are clinically proven to be safe and effective.

Private Label vs. Brand Name

What exactly is private label, and is this option something to think about when starting an esthetic business?

One of the growing trends in the esthetics field is the opportunity to *create* a cosmetics label with your own business entity name. There are several cosmetic laboratories that offer a variety of multi-faceted, pre-formulated products that allow you to choose the exact type of cosmeceuticals you carry in your practice.

Some of the benefits of private label cosmeceuticals include a lower initial product investment amount to get started, and a much higher retail mark-up (200-400%) than with branded lines (usually 100%). A higher retail mark-up gives you the option of setting the pricing for your products after careful competitor research. You are able to customize packaging and labeling with private label. Offering an exclusive private label enables customers to stay connected to your business, even when they are not coming in for regular treatments. In addition, even if your business is new, a private label makes the practice look more established, which reflects positively to current and potential clients.



Detriments to carrying a private label line include competitors carrying similar formulas (with their own labels and packaging) since the ingredients are widely available including department stores, multi-level marketing companies or mass market. Product formulas are made in large volumes and then can be stored an average of ten months after manufacture date before they are distributed to accounts.³ Most active ingredients, such as antioxidants and hydroxy

acids, may not remain stable during the entire time it is in storage prior to being purchased because they begin auto-oxidation when manufactured. Since product freshness affects product chemistry, this is something to consider.

As well, you would have to create your own marketing and support materials for your products, and that expense could override the lower product investment. There may also be a lack of training or support materials available with private label. A return policy may be difficult to render if a client has a problem with product packaging or sensitivity.

It is interesting to note that there are many branded retail cosmeceutical lines on the market today that actually come from the same private label manufacturer as yours. Anyone can decide to become a brand. Dr. X can call up any private label cosmeceutical lab, check the boxes on which type of ingredients he wants in any particular formulation, decide on labeling and packaging and, voila! His branded products arrive a few weeks later.

With a branded line, your patients will come in and specifically ask for it by name. There is a wealth of support offered with a branded line, in the form of literature, educational tools, marketing, and product sampling, along with advertising of the line in nationally and internationally distributed trade and consumer magazines or other media sources. Branded lines are also more elegantly packaged than private label, with embossed containers rather than stick-on labels. Some branded cosmeceutical lines manufacture, fill and ship product directly from the main corporate office location, which is valuable to ensure that formula integrity and quality are not compromised. Branded lines usually offer a very liberal return policy when any product problems are experienced.

Some of the drawbacks with some, but not all, branded lines may include high initial or re-order requirements, old packaging surplus if the line updates packaging, and availability on internet discount websites or auction sites. So consider the branded line's internet selling policy, if one is in place. Companies have varying levels of oversight for discount online shopping options. Determine what your preferences are regarding online sales, and ask for those policies if that is important to you.

Contrary to what you might believe, the spa located across the street that carries the same line isn't a negative to carrying a branded cosmeceutical line. What makes your practice and branded line *unique* is each of your employees involved with patient care and the memorable experience your patient has in your office. People like to bring home memories from pleasant experiences. In

addition to providing healthy skin, home care products also provide patients a token of their experience.

When making the choice to carry private label or branded products in your practice, keep the new ideal of healthy skin aging guidelines in mind and do the necessary research.

I have practiced dermatology for 30 years, and began offering cosmeceuticals in my office 12 years ago. I initially opted to choose only select specific products from multiple lines. This strategy was not successful because the office staff and mid-level providers became so confused about which products to use together, and in which sequence, that they virtually stopped recommending products. Now offering a single line has every employee advocating the line at each step in patient/client processing.

Whether you carry one complete multi-faceted cosmeceutical line or cherry-pick your favorite products from several different lines, it is important to have a plan to identify where each product fits in with your clientele demographic and treatments offered. For example, if you are specializing in acne treatments for teens and twenties, you may not need to keep anti-aging serums or moisturizers in your stocked inventory. And, if the majority of your patient population is preparing and/or healing from facial rejuvenation procedures, a cosmeceutical line directed to acne patients may end up gathering dust on the shelf. Also remember that more is not necessarily better for your clientele – there are a few individuals who love to follow several different steps with a multitude of products, but a straightforward program requiring 2-4 steps in the morning and/or evening is much easier to follow, making client compliance effortless. As a simple rule, it makes more economic sense to carry one complete cosmeceutical line and supplement, if necessary, any missing treatment products from one or two other lines.

The Consultation Process

A consultation is a meeting or a discussion with an expert in order to obtain information or advice. After hearing the patient's objectives, expectations and concerns, the expert provides an educated recommendation to help the patient