

Going Cosmetic

By Glenn Morley

This is Part 2 in a 3-part series exploring the integration of cosmetic services into a dermatology practice.

For physicians who have decided to incorporate cosmetic services into their established dermatology practice, the early planning stages are like a honeymoon. Managers and physicians engage in lively discussion about creating a medical spa or aesthetic center. New skincare lines are road tested by staff. Lasers are contemplated. And “coming soon” is the excited response for all cosmetic inquiries. During this phase it’s easy to look at the move toward cosmetic services through idealistic, rose-colored glasses.

But incorporating cosmetic services requires more than just excitement and brainstorming sessions with vendors. Good planning and a drive to success are essential. So before you send out e-blasts for open houses and Botox nights, focus on foundational nuts and bolts. Even your earliest aesthetic patients must get a 5-star experience when they visit your website, call for information, or come in for a consult. You get only one chance to make a first impression.

1. Define your ‘inner guru.’

In today’s competitive aesthetic world, you’ve got to define and ‘own’ your particular expertise in cosmetic dermatology. Which procedures do you want to be known for? What services differentiate your practice? How are you, the physician, different than your competitors, and why should patients choose you?

When you are excellent at what you do, the marketplace will buy or finance what you are selling. Ten thousand Baby Boomers turn 65 each day; that’s a big opportunity for physicians able to articulate their value and deliver a great patient experience and great clinical results. How you define your ‘inner guru’ is the first step toward developing both.

2. Don’t just dabble. Be committed to cosmetic.

“Dabbling” in cosmetic medicine does not build a loyal patient base or long term cosmetic relationships. Few things shout “dabble” as much as keeping a cosmetic patient waiting. Before scheduling the first cosmetic patient, think through existing patient processes and determine how you’ll cater to cosmetic patients, not just dabble with them. Carve out a defined time in your schedule for injectable sessions, laser sessions, and cosmetic consultations.

Dabbling dermatologists can also make the mistake of not taking the office décor and patient experience up a few notches. Don’t be one of these. Ensure the reception room furniture and furnishings are up-to-date. Send staff to customer service training. Add polish to communication materials and fee quotes. And make sure everyone from physicians to staff is well groomed and dressed neatly and professionally.

3. Create a team of disciples with accountability.

Many practices focus all of their energy on training a handful of staff members to interact and

communicate with cosmetic patients. This is a mistake. While it is great to have a “point person” available for key activities such as fee quoting or answering in-depth questions, all staff and providers must believe in, and be able to, articulate your expertise. There can be no room for doubt or hesitation when it comes to talking about you as the cosmetic dermatology guru to see.

Further, dividing staff into cosmetic and non-cosmetic groups can be divisive among the team. At some point in their journey with you, patients interact with almost every staff member – from front desk to billing. Confidence, gratitude, and expertise must be on display by all staff, at all times. There can be no weak links. Every team member must be counted on to channel some passion when asked by a patient, “Is he (or she) any good?”

Those who fail to get with the program of integrating cosmetic services with general dermatology can become resented by staff that have, and should receive additional training or discipline. Those unable to make the “cosmetic cut” are not the right fit for your new practice.

4. Prepare talking points and scripts.

“Secret shopping” of dermatology practices reveals that staff often rushes to provide callers and patients with prices instead of first communicating the practice’s unique service propositions and value points. This is not staff’s fault if they have never been provided with what to say or how to say it. Both of these things matter and both can be taught.

Don’t put staff in the position of making up talking points on the fly. Anticipate this essential training need by working as a team to create scripts that promote you as the most talented, artistic, and experienced cosmetic dermatology ‘guru’ who anyone seeking cosmetic rejuvenation should schedule with. And make it a point to provide details about financing options in the script. Copay and deductible increases have encouraged both cosmetic and medical patients to investigate special healthcare financing options. Patients have a lot of questions, and staff can best serve them by capably explaining how healthcare financing works as well as explaining your skills and value. Providing training for service elements and the nuts and bolts of financial options is an investment in garnering positive patient reviews at online rating sites, and great word of mouth referrals.

Glenn Morley, practice management consultant with Karen Zupko & Associates, analyzes practices and advises physicians and managers on operational, financial, personnel and marketing strategy and tactics. Look for the next article from Glenn Morley in this “Going Cosmetic” series in the next newsletter. All statements and opinions in this article are the sole opinions of the author and not those of CareCredit, GE Capital Retail Bank. The content is subject to change without notice and offered for informational use only. You are urged to consult with your individual advisors with respect to any professional advice presented. Your receipt of this material constitutes your acceptance of these terms and conditions.

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