

Internally Marketing your Esthetic Medical Practice, Esthetician and Services

One of the primary reasons esthetic medical practices fail is due to a lack of understanding of what each professional brings to the table and how they can most effectively work together. Getting your physician and esthetician on the same page requires time and effort. A thorough discussion needs to take place regarding how their professional relationship will work. This includes development of a marketing strategy that advances the practice philosophy and practice objectives; addresses competitive advantages, marketing program design and tracking systems.

If your practice has already developed a mission statement, it should be reviewed by the esthetician to ensure his or her contributions are included. The practice's objectives should include revenues, market share, etc. The competitive advantage states the difference between what your practice is doing versus what the competition is doing. Finally, a marketing program must address product positioning, target marketing, pricing policies, and internal and external promotional advertising.

This article focuses on what the medical practice can do to internally market the addition of an esthetician and esthetic services into your business operation. Often, the simplest way to grow the esthetician's patient base is through passive marketing. Below are basic steps a practice needs to take to successfully integrate this type of marketing strategy.

1. The esthetician needs to know the types of procedures and surgeries performed, as well as disease specialties treated by the practice physician (or physicians). The written protocol detailing the physician scope of practice is the "Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)". This document should include a comprehensive understanding of the procedure(s), possible complications and surgical outcomes, healing times and any other pertinent information about all the procedures. If your practice does not have an SOP, don't leave it up to the esthetician to put these procedures in place. Rather, have the esthetician work with the nurse or PA who already has experience working with the physician.
2. The physician needs to understand the types of procedures performed by the esthetician. In order for this discussion to be successful, the esthetician should be able to talk at the physician's level, i.e. using clear medical, technical and scientific terminology to describe the efficacy of various esthetic treatments, equipment used and services they will provide. Required knowledge of products and their ingredients are also key elements the esthetician should be able to explain to the physician, so they have a clear understanding of how those products might affect the patient's skin. Hiring a state licensed esthetician who has attained the NCEA Certified credential will go a long way to ensure a higher competency in the esthetic profession.
3. Each procedure or surgery should have its own written SOP, including, when to treat, how to treat and what to treat. For instance, after laser resurfacing when should the esthetician begin skin treatments? What is the physician's SOP on dealing with an acne patient? If you sit the esthetician down with the physician to have a *meeting of the minds* it will ensure that they understand the interconnectedness of their skin care philosophies. The old adage, "fail to plan, plan to fail" holds true. If the time is not taken to carefully set up the integration of the esthetic services, too many assumptions, leading to inaccuracies will be start to appear.
4. Once there is an understanding of what the esthetician can offer the physician and vice versa, the

next important step in building an internal client base is to “meet and greet.” The esthetician has to “sell” themselves to the existing patient base. The physician can also play an integral role in developing the patient’s trust of this new member of the practice team. The physician needs to feel comfortable having the esthetician accompany them on clinical rounds and meet the patients. Appropriate discretion is required, but the best way to grow an internal patient base is to have the esthetician attached to the physician’s hip!

5. It is vitally important the practice identify prospective esthetic patients and make them known to the esthetician. The front desk staff plays an important role in flagging the patients that ask for additional information on services offered by the practice. The use of an intake form is a passive way to inform ALL patients of the new esthetic services that you offer in the practice. The form simply asks, “Do you have any skin care concerns such as dry skin, breakouts, aging skin, fine lines and wrinkles, etc.?” The patient can circle yes – and contact is made. From this point it is up to the physician or front desk staff to let the esthetician know of the patient’s interest. Of course, ruling out any chronic condition or dermatologic disease would come first from the physician, but this would create the opportunity to offer a complimentary consultation with the esthetician. Whether the patient is there for a cosmetic consultation with the physician or not, some patients would never *think* of asking about the dry skin on their face! And, if the patient can’t afford to do the physician-recommended laser treatment right now, it’s in their best interest, at the very least, to begin a healthy skin care regimen. At this point, the esthetician can initiate treatment, develop patient loyalty, grow a cosmetic patient base, and so on.

6. General internal marketing can include:

- a) The introduction of the esthetician to the practice and overview of the new services offered in the practice via social marketing or e-newsletters.

- b) Placement of patient brochures in the treatment rooms, listing all services (medical and cosmetic) specific to your medical practice. If the patient wants to read something, they will look at whatever is available, and that includes information about other services offered in the practice. If I had a dollar for every time I heard a patient say, “You do that?” I’d be rich!

7. Establish telephone scripts for the services the esthetician offers; this creates communication with prospective patients. This strategy requires clearly written telephone protocols to be used by any staff member with telephone responsibilities. Of course, the esthetician should have already given *everyone—including the physician*, a skin care consultation and facial treatment so that they know *first-hand* what the esthetician does.

8. The art of personal thank-you cards seems to be disappearing in this electronic age, but considering the personal nature of what esthetic services bring to the patient, perhaps we need to reevaluate this simple marketing gesture. Enclosing a complimentary skin care consultation offer with the esthetician, or invitation to an upcoming physician seminar or skin cancer screening, will give the card added benefits.

Communication is key to establishing a successful esthetic medical practice, and although personalities may make collaboration challenging at times, the success of having established clear practice objectives will definitely be seen in your increased bottom line!

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Tags: Marketing, Aesthetics