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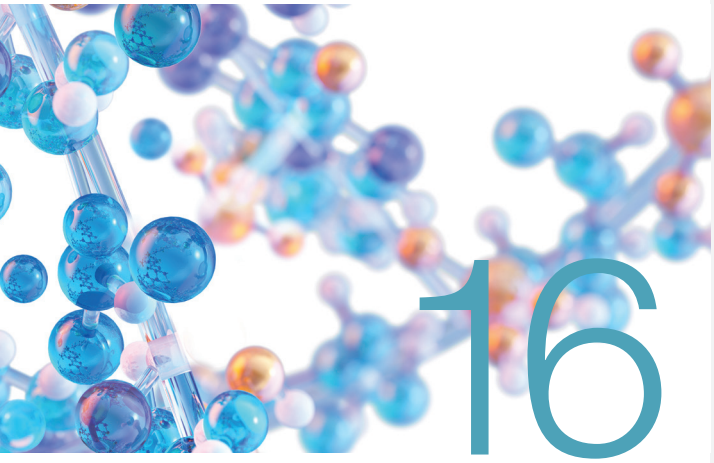

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Changes Take Time and Sometimes a Trained Professional

Skin Inc.'s Content Director Emmanuel Henderson shares what's on his mind.

Change can feel impossible to control, let alone predict or respond to without the tools. Our skin can feel similarly out of our control as we encounter stress, poor sleep or...less than ideal habits. Luckily, skin is one of the few lifelong accountability partners we get and unlike general change, we can always just call a professional.

As beauty embraces holistic solutions that are aimed at long-term, healthy and balanced results, estheticians and spa professionals are in a position to constantly elevate their approach to the skin care and concerns.

Still, for skin and spa professionals, acne and compromised skin bring unique obstacles both in treatment and in business. Knowing how to help, how to talk about it and when to refer out can be challenging, especially amongst misinformation and regulatory shifts.

In our acne awareness month issue, industry experts cover the topic (and more) with tips on maximizing care within your license, strategies for handling compromised skin in male clients and making sure you're up to date with the science surrounding acne and acne care.



Emmanuel Henderson



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Glow Season Is Officially Here

By Tia Jones

Summer is coming in hot. A new season gives us an opportunity to try new things, see what works and what doesn't to find something better.



1 Inside Out Beauty

People are opting to include foods in their diets that help with their overall skin health. Everything from beverages or powders that contain collagen to eating sardines, which are rich in Omega-3 fatty acids and can help with healthier skin, hair and nails. Beauty beverages are promoting health and wellness, while providing benefits that can improve the outside appearance.
www.myliquidyouth.com

2 Suncare is Skin care

Skin care companies are providing more options for people who want to incorporate sun protection products into their skin care ritual. The formulas are being developed for use after cleanser, before moisturizers and to work well under makeup for skin benefits and sun protection. Skin care companies are creating tinted, mineral sunscreens and gel sunscreens to protect against UVA UVB and infrared and blue light exposure.
www.zoskinhealth.com

3 Anti-Aging Skin care

Serums that lift and firm and change the appearance of visible fine lines and wrinkles are coming into the conversation as an alternative to other forms of anti-aging techniques. The products are for the neck and chest where more visible signs of aging can occur. The aim is that with continued use over time there will be long-term results. The focus is on aging gracefully and improving the skin for longevity.
www.osmosisbeauty.com

4 Less Routine, More Ritual

A move away from routine and a move toward ritual, more relaxation and calm. Products are being developed infused with crystals or using crystals to create a holistic experience, with the goal of reducing and calming inflammation. People are looking for more sensorial experiences that make them feel luxurious.
www.divineaurabeauty.com

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www.bioelements.com

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Karyna Haiduk

By Kitty Lin



Karyna Haiduk

We sat down with Karyna Haiduk, an aesthetics expert who's distinguished in depilation and brow design. An author and mentor in sugaring, waxing and skin care, in her more than 7 years of experience, she's founded her own professional sugar paste and post-care cosmetics brand, Fast-Silk. Haiduk is a recipient of the Berehynia of Ukraine, an award that acknowledges the distinct efforts of the winner's contributions to the country's development and support. As of 2024, Haiduk was granted the title, Ambassador of Epilation and Depilation, by the Golden Hands of Ukraine.

KL: How do you approach hair removal with a client that has severe active acne? Does your approach change depending on if it's face vs. body acne?

KH: As an experienced depilation specialist, I always approach such cases with great care and an individual strategy. When a client comes to me with severe acne, the first thing I do is assess the condition of their skin—this is absolutely essential. It's important to determine whether the inflammation is in an active phase or already beginning to subside. If the acne is acute and the skin is highly irritated, I usually recommend postponing the procedure and consulting a dermatologist first. The client's health always comes first. My approach definitely differs depending on the area being treated.

For facial areas, especially the cheeks and chin—where the skin is most sensitive—I do not perform hair removal on active breakouts. Doing so can worsen the condition. In some cases, I can carefully treat isolated zones, such as the space between the eyebrows if the skin there is calm. Even then though, I work very gently and avoid anything aggressive.

On the body, for example, the back, buttocks or chest, I evaluate the size and severity of the affected areas. If there are only a few breakouts and they are not inflamed, I may perform sugaring carefully, avoiding the problem spots to prevent irritation or trauma. I always use antiseptics before and after the procedure, wear gloves, maintain strict hygiene and use only disposable materials.

Overall, when working with acne-prone skin, the key is to take your time, listen to the client and their body and be as gentle as possible. Of course, I always give clear aftercare instructions to help avoid complications and ensure the skin heals properly.

KL: What professional acne treatments can't be paired with professional hair removal treatments?

KH: When a client comes to me who is undergoing acne treatment, I always start by asking what products and procedures they are currently using because not everything is safe to combine with hair removal.

First and foremost, I pay attention to retinoids—both oral (such as Roaccutane/Isotretinoin) and topical (creams containing retinol or tretinoin). These products make the skin very thin, dry and sensitive, which means even the gentlest hair removal can cause burns or lift the surface layer of the skin. So, during this kind of therapy, I usually recommend postponing hair removal for at least 4–6 months after the treatment ends.

I also do not combine hair removal with chemical peels, microdermabrasion, laser resurfacing or other intensive skin treatments that compromise the skin's protective barrier. In such cases, the skin needs time to recover and I typically recommend waiting 7–14 days (depending on the procedure) before performing depilation

In addition, when clients are taking antibiotics or anti-inflammatory medications, the skin can become unstable and more prone to injury. That's why an individual approach is essential, and sometimes I perform a patch test first. My goal is not just to perform a treatment, but to keep the client's skin in healthy condition. That's why I always start with a consultation to choose the best timing and safest technique. This approach ensures excellent results and minimizes the risk of complications.

KL: How can those of us performing depilation procedures tailor our post-care recommendations to our more acne-prone clients?

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KH: As an experienced depilation specialist, I know for sure—there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Especially when it comes to clients with acne-prone skin. Here, a more attentive and personalized approach is essential. I always start by assessing the skin type and the severity of acne. It's one thing if there are occasional breakouts on the body and quite another if the client has oily, sensitive skin with frequent inflammation. Based on that, I select the gentlest, non-comedogenic products for both pre- and post-treatment care.

Here's how I adapt my recommendations:

Before the procedure, I advise avoiding heavy cosmetics, scrubs and acids, especially 2–3 days before sugaring or waxing.

After the procedure, I recommend avoiding oils, heavy creams, self-tanners and fragranced lotions. I suggest gentle antiseptics like chlorhexidine, hydrolats or aloe-based gels.

For acne-prone skin, I stay away from aggressive products, prefer lightweight lotions with anti-inflammatory ingredients or zinc-based powders to reduce irritation and prevent breakouts.

I always remind clients: no tight clothing, exercise or saunas for 24–48 hours, especially if they have oily skin and easily clogged pores.

I also explain that it's important to maintain not only a skin care routine but also good hygiene habits: clean clothing, breathable fabrics and avoiding touching the skin unnecessarily. If a client has more serious skin issues, I'm always open to collaborating with a dermatologist and adjusting my treatments to complement any prescribed therapy. For me, it's not just about removing hair, it's about helping the client prevent inflammation, avoid discomfort and feel confident in their body. That's what true professionalism means in our field.

KL: Can you go into how you recommend different hair removal techniques to different clients?

KH: I always select the hair removal method individually, taking into account the client's skin type, health condition, sensitivity level, pain threshold and even lifestyle. This is especially important for clients with acne-prone skin, since using the wrong method can lead to irritation or worsen inflammation.

Here's how I approach method selection:

For clients with sensitive, inflamed or acne-prone skin, I usually recommend sugaring. It's gentle on the skin, doesn't damage the top layer, washes off easily with water and the paste itself is hypoallergenic and has anti-inflammatory properties. It's especially well-suited for delicate areas and oily, breakout-prone skin.

For clients with normal, resilient skin that's not prone to irritation, both waxing and sugaring can work well—depending on personal preference. Waxing is great for larger areas (like legs and arms), but requires careful aftercare to prevent ingrown hairs and irritation.

For clients with coarse, dark or stubborn hair, especially on the face, I often recommend electrolysis. It's the only hair removal method FDA-approved as 100% permanent. It's a great option for people with hormonal imbalances or unwanted facial hair due to medical conditions. However, it's not recommended when active inflammation is present.

For clients with a low pain threshold or high anxiety, I suggest starting with sugaring on a small area. I explain the process thoroughly and create a calm, supportive environment and often, any fear disappears after the first session.

It's important to remember that the method should be chosen based on what suits the client, not what's most convenient for the specialist. My goal is to clearly explain the pros and cons of each method, properly prepare the skin, perform the treatment carefully and give aftercare instructions. That's the only way to ensure safe, long-lasting results and happy, healthy skin.

KL: What other skin conditions require careful consideration when it comes to hair removal? What are some of the obstacles?

KH: Before every procedure, I always carefully examine the skin, because there are situations when hair removal should be done with caution—or postponed altogether.

Here are the main skin conditions I pay attention to:

Couperose and rosacea: with these conditions, the skin is very sensitive and blood vessels are close to the surface. Waxing can worsen redness and irritation. In such cases, I prefer gentler methods like sugaring and avoid anything that could overheat or stress the skin.

Active inflammation or infections: if there are boils, herpes, cuts or abrasions, the procedure should be delayed until the skin fully heals. Hair removal can spread infection or it could also aggravate inflammation.

Severe dryness and flaking: dry skin is more prone to microtears and damage. It's important to restore moisture first before performing hair removal.

Allergic reactions or eczema: during flare-ups, it's best to wait until remission. I also always ask about any product allergies (e.g. honey, lemon, essential oils) to avoid triggering a reaction.

Scars, burns, fresh tattoos or recent peels: these areas should not be treated. The skin needs time to recover completely before undergoing hair removal.

Pregnancy and varicose veins: these aren't absolute contraindications, but they do require a more delicate approach. It depends on how the client feels and the area being treated.

The most important thing is not to rush into a procedure "at any cost." If the skin needs rest or treatment, I always explain that to the client. Sometimes it's better to wait and properly prepare the skin than to risk burns, pigmentation or irritation.



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NATURAL AND ORGANIC SKINCARE: RESTORING SKIN HEALTH FROM THE GROUND UP

By Shahma Ataullah

The rapid growth of the natural and organic skincare market reflects a fundamental shift in how people perceive skin health. Today's consumers desire more than temporary cosmetic improvements that may compromise the skin's barrier and long-term resilience. Instead, they seek products that are biologically compatible, transparently formulated, and environmentally responsible. Natural skincare embraces modern scientific advances, combining botanical chemistry with dermatological research to support the skin's natural repair mechanisms rather than overriding them.

Why Natural Skincare Is Clinically Relevant

REDUCED CHEMICAL LOAD AND BARRIER PRESERVATION

Many conventional products contain harsh surfactants, synthetic fragrances, and stabilizers that can damage the stratum corneum. Although these ingredients are permitted by regulations, frequent use may cause irritation, sensitization, and long-term barrier dysfunction. In contrast, natural skincare uses plant-based emulsifiers, preservatives, and lipids that resemble those found in human skin, thereby supporting rather than disrupting the skin's barrier function.

BIOLOGICALLY ACTIVE PLANT COMPOUNDS

Botanical ingredients are biologically active rather than inert. Examples such as aloe vera, green tea, chamomile, rosehip, and turmeric contain polyphenols, flavonoids, carotenoids, and essential fatty acids. These compounds exhibit anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Recent dermatological research demonstrates their ability to reduce oxidative stress, regulate inflammation, and promote healthy cell turnover. Their value lies in their chemical compatibility with human skin, rather than novelty.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ETHICAL IMPACT

Organic skincare offers benefits that extend beyond personal well-being. Ingredients grown without pesticides or synthetic fertilizers support environmental health by reducing toxicity and protecting water and soil quality. Many brands also adhere to ethical practices such as cruelty-free testing, sustainable harvesting, and reduced plastic usage. Thus, skincare decisions now contribute to broader public health and environmental concerns.

CORE NATURAL INGREDIENTS AND FUNCTIONAL BENEFITS

Aloe Vera

- Aloe vera hydrates through polysaccharides. It also reduces redness and speeds up barrier recovery. It is especially useful for sensitive, damaged, or post-inflammatory skin.

Rosehip Oil

- Rosehip oil has trans-retinoic acid precursors and vitamin C. These support collagen production, regulate pigmentation, and help with scar healing.

Green Tea Extract

- Green tea extract is rich in EGCG. This compound neutralizes free radicals and lowers inflammation. It works well for acne-prone and reactive skin.

Shea Butter

- Shea butter provides long-chain fatty acids. These restore lipid balance and lower water loss. It is useful for dry or eczema-prone skin.

Turmeric

- Turmeric has anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial effects. It improves skin brightness. It works best when well-formulated for absorption.

EVIDENCE-INFORMED NATURAL SKINCARE PRACTICES

Oil Cleansing

- Plant oils dissolve sebum and oily debris without harming the skin's acid mantle. Oils like jojoba and sunflower are close to human sebum, so they lower rebound oil production.

Clay Masking

- Kaolin and bentonite clays absorb excess oil and pollutants. They also supply trace minerals. Use these clays occasionally to prevent dehydration of the skin barrier.

Herbal Steam Therapy

- Herbal steam helps circulation and slightly opens pores. This technique provides helpful, not main, benefits and is not suited to rosacea-prone skin.

Raw Honey Applications

- Raw honey draws in moisture and acts as a mild antibacterial. It helps heal wounds and supports hydration. Use a small amount and remove it gently.

Manual Lymphatic Techniques

- Facial massage and gua sha improve lymph drainage and blood flow. Used with botanical oils, they support skin health and make routines more enjoyable.

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Understanding "Natural" and "Organic" Claims

The term 'natural' is largely unregulated, whereas 'organic' refers to certified standards that prohibit synthetic inputs and GMOs. Certifications such as USDA Organic, COSMOS, and Ecocert help verify these claims but do not guarantee suitability for every individual. It remains essential to review ingredient lists. Ultimately, a product's efficacy depends on its potency, stability, and delivery system, not marketing claims.[1,2]

INTEGRATING BOTANICAL AND CLINICAL ACTIVES

Effective skincare is not one or the other. Botanical products work best with proven actives such as niacinamide, hyaluronic acid, peptides, and mineral sunscreens. This approach helps skin physiology while targeting clinical needs.

A functional routine typically includes:

- A low-irritation plant-based cleanser
- A botanical toner or hydrosol
- A serum containing validated actives
- A lipid-supportive moisturizer
- A broad-spectrum mineral sunscreen

Conclusion

Natural and organic skincare represents a thoughtful return to biological fundamentals. Supported by scientific evidence and rigorous formulation, botanical products are neither simplistic nor inferior. They provide a lasting, barrier-friendly approach to maintaining skin health and supporting the environment. Achieving lasting results is best accomplished by working in harmony with the skin's natural processes.

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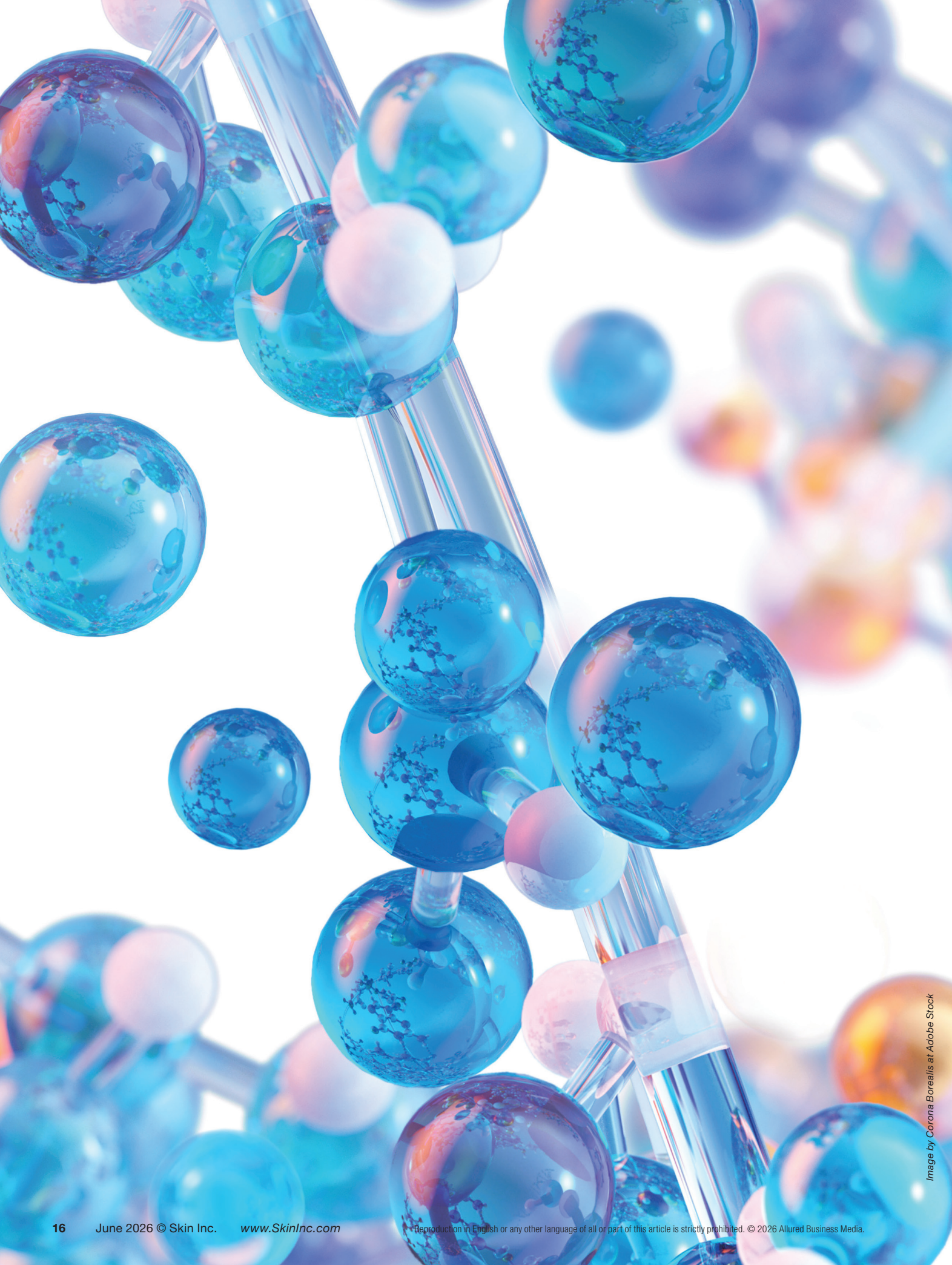

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ACNE REIMAGINED: QUORUM SENSING, PEPTIDES AND THE FUTURE OF TREATING ACNE

By Mark Viktora

For decades, acne has been treated as a problem to eliminate, targeting bacteria, stripping oil, and suppressing inflammation, but what if acne is not something to fight, but something to understand? Emerging science is shifting the conversation away from eradication and toward regulation, communication and balance. The skin is not simply reacting to bacteria, it is responding to a complex network of signals within the pilosebaceous environment. Through the lens of quorum sensing and peptide science, acne can be approached in an entirely new way: not by disrupting the skin, but by working with its natural mechanisms. This evolving perspective opens the door to modified treatment strategies that support microbiome balance, regulate inflammatory signaling and encourage healthier skin function without relying solely on traditional aggressive ingredients or medications.



Acne vulgaris, cast as the primary villain, has been described as a bacterial condition, with Cutibacterium acnes (C. acnes), formerly known as Propionibacterium acnes (P. acnes). Yet modern microbiome research is revealing a more complex story. The very bacterium long blamed for acne may actually play an important role in maintaining healthy skin. Rather than being an enemy of the skin, C. acnes is now understood to be a normal and often beneficial member of the skin microbiome. Acne may develop not simply from the presence of bacteria, but from disruptions in the delicate balance of the skin's microbial ecosystem.

C. acnes is not an invading pathogen. In fact, it is one of the most abundant members of the normal skin microbiota and resides deep within the pilosebaceous unit. This bacterium contributes to skin health in several ways. By metabolizing sebum lipids, C. acnes produces short-chain fatty acids such as propionic acid, which help maintain the skin's naturally acidic pH and discourage colonization by harmful microbes.

Certain strains of C. acnes also produce antimicrobial molecules that regulate microbial competition within the follicle. One recent discovery is a peptide antibiotic known as cutimycin, produced by specific strains of C. acnes. This molecule helps microbial communities within the follicle to remain balanced.[1] Discoveries like this highlight an important principle of microbiology: microorganisms constantly compete and cooperate to maintain balance within the skin ecosystem.

Rather than being inherently harmful, C. acnes is part of a complex microbial ecosystem that supports barrier function and immune regulation. Acne appears to develop not simply from the presence of this bacterium, but from disruptions within the delicate balance of the pilosebaceous unit. This structure includes the hair follicle and its associated sebaceous gland, where sebum production, microbial activity and inflammation interact.

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Microbial Diversity and Acne

Recent research has revealed that not all C. acnes strains behave the same way. Genetic analysis has identified multiple phylotypes, or distinct bacterial subgroups, that differ in their biological activity. Some strains appear more commonly in healthy skin, while others are more frequently associated with inflammatory acne.[2] Healthy skin typically contains a diverse population of C. acnes phylotypes living alongside other commensal microbes.

In acne-prone skin, however, this diversity often decreases, allowing certain inflammatory strains to dominate the follicular environment. This loss of microbial diversity, often referred to as microbiome dysbiosis (imbalance), may play an important role in triggering inflammatory responses. Rather than the simple presence of bacteria, acne may therefore be driven by shifts in microbial balance within the follicle.

Understanding this concept has led many researchers to reconsider traditional approaches that aim to eliminate bacteria altogether.

Acne as a Network of Interconnected Pathways

Acne develops through several biological processes occurring within the pilosebaceous unit. These include increased sebum production, follicular hyperkeratinization, where skin cells within the follicle accumulate and fail to shed properly, microbial imbalance and inflammatory immune responses. When these factors converge, the follicle becomes blocked, forming what is known as a microcomedone, the earliest stage of acne development.

However, these processes are influenced by signals that extend beyond the skin itself. Hormones, metabolic pathways, stress responses and even the gut microbiome can influence sebaceous activity and inflammatory signaling. Many of these signals, including certain hormones, immune mediators and microbial communication molecules, are peptide-based messengers that help coordinate biological activity throughout the body.

For example, insulin, which can be influenced by diet, are known to increase sebaceous gland activity and inflammatory responses in the skin.[3] Stress can also influence acne through hormonal signaling. During periods of stress, the body releases hormones, that can stimulate sebaceous glands and increase inflammatory responses in the skin.

Another emerging area of research involves the gut-skin axis. The gut microbiome produces metabolites and immune signals that circulate throughout the body and may influence inflammatory pathways within the skin.[4] Viewed through this broader lens, acne becomes less of a localized bacterial problem and more of a complex biological network influenced by internal and external signals.

The Future of Acne Care: Bacterial Communication and Quorum Sensing

Quorum sensing, the way bacteria communicate and coordinate behavior, is reshaping how estheticians can view acne, ingredients, and treatment strategies. Instead of working against the skin, this perspective encourages working with the skin's natural systems, using targeted ingredients like peptides to influence microbial behavior, reduce inflammatory signaling, and restore balance. This shift opens the door to reimagining acne care, moving from aggressive correction to guided regulation and long-term skin health.

Quorum sensing allows bacteria to release signaling molecules that help them detect how many other bacteria are nearby. When bacterial populations reach a certain threshold, these signals can activate coordinated behaviors such as enzyme production, biofilm formation and inflammatory responses.







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In the case of C. acnes, these signaling systems may influence how bacterial populations interact with the immune system and contribute to inflammation within the follicle. One promising aspect of peptide research is that these molecules may influence microbial behavior without necessarily eliminating bacteria outright.

Many bacteria regulate their activity through signaling systems that coordinate their behavior within a microbial community. Peptides that interfere with these signaling pathways may disrupt bacterial coordination, preventing the activation of inflammatory processes while allowing beneficial members of the microbiome to remain present. In many ways, these strategies work by leveraging the same communication systems microbes already use to interact with one another.

Rather than attempting to "sterilize" the skin, these approaches aim to influence bacterial behavior and restore balance within the follicular environment.

The Skin's Natural Defense: Antimicrobial Peptides

The skin also possesses its own sophisticated defense system in the form of antimicrobial peptides, often referred to as AMPs. These molecules have been widely studied in biochemistry and immunology because they act as key regulators of microbial balance across many biological systems.

These small signaling molecules are produced naturally by keratinocytes and immune cells as part of the innate immune response. Unlike traditional antibiotics that broadly eliminate bacteria, antimicrobial peptides can influence microbial populations in more selective ways.

They can disrupt potentially harmful bacteria while helping maintain balance among commensal microbes that contribute to healthy skin. In acne-prone skin, the expression of these peptides often increases as part of the skin's attempt to restore equilibrium when inflammation or barrier disruption occurs.

Advances in biotechnology are also allowing researchers to explore peptide fragments produced through microbial fermentation. Certain ingredients derived from bacterial species, including Bacillus, can generate bioactive peptides that interact with microbial communities on the skin. Rather than functioning as harsh antimicrobial agents, these peptides may help regulate bacterial behavior, reduce inflammatory signaling and support microbiome balance within the follicle.

Topical peptides, particularly antimicrobial peptides (AMPs), can help regulate quorum sensing by interfering with the signaling molecules bacteria use to coordinate inflammatory activity. Instead of eliminating beneficial microbes, these peptides work to disrupt bacterial communication, preventing the cascade of events that lead to biofilm formation, excess inflammation, and breakouts. By influencing microbial behavior and supporting the skin's natural defense systems, AMPs help restore balance within the follicular environment, leading to fewer acne occurrences and more stable, resilient skin.

Toward a More Balanced Approach to Acne Care

The evolving understanding of acne suggests that the condition is not simply a bacterial infection but a disruption of a complex biological ecosystem. Sebum production, follicular keratinization, microbial signaling, immune responses and systemic

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influences all interact within the pilosebaceous unit.

For skincare professionals, this emerging science highlights the importance of treatment strategies that aim to restore balance rather than aggressively suppress individual components of the system. Supporting the skin barrier, maintaining microbiome diversity, regulating inflammation and encouraging healthy cellular turnover help create an environment where acne is less likely to develop.

As research continues to uncover new insights into microbial communication and peptide biology, the future of acne care may increasingly focus on working with the skin's natural systems rather than against them.

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HANDLE WITH CARE: TAKING CLIENTS FROM THINNING TO THRIVING

By Shawna Rocha

Hair loss in men has long been treated as inevitable, something to either accept quietly or attempt to fix through invasive, expensive, and often intimidating procedures. But what if the future of hair restoration isn't found in surgical suites or prescription regimens… but in controlled, targeted stimulation of the body's own regenerative response?

For decades, the dominant narrative around male hair loss has been limited to two extremes: do nothing or commit to aggressive intervention. From transplants to long-term pharmaceutical regimens, many of the most well-known solutions come with barriers—cost, fear, downtime or simply the psychological hurdle of admitting there's a problem to begin with.

Remember to check state regulations to ensure you are operating within the scope of your license. Different states have different boundaries for practicing estheticians.

That last piece? It matters more than most people realize. For many men, the hesitation isn't just about the treatment itself; it's about identity. Hair loss can feel tied to aging, control and self-perception, making the decision to seek help more complex than it appears on the surface.

While men may not always talk about hair loss, they are absolutely aware of it. They notice the thinning at the crown, the recession at the temples, the widening part, and they are now more than ever seeking solutions. There's even a new viral trend online where men are flocking to places like Istanbul, Turkey for "Hair Tourism" where they can access invasive and risky procedures for 60-70% less than the United States! So much so that spotting tourists with shaved heads and bandages at the airports has become commonplace.

What's often overlooked in this trend is the lack of continuity of care. These procedures are typically performed quickly, with limited follow-up, minimal long-term oversight, and varying standards of regulation. Patients are left to navigate healing, complications, and results largely on their own once they return home.

It's a powerful indicator of demand, but also a clear signal that many men are willing to take significant risks simply because they don't feel there are approachable options available to them locally.

This growing demand for services that feel both effective and approachable has created space for an entirely new category of treatment, one that is quietly, yet powerfully, reshaping the hair restoration landscape and creating a shift toward regenerative, non-invasive solutions and services.

In recent years, we've seen this shift in aesthetics toward treatments that work with the body rather than against it. Instead of forcing change through aggressive means, modern protocols increasingly focus on triggering the body's own repair and regeneration processes. Hair restoration is no exception.

Micro channeling represents a new approach rooted in this philosophy. Rather than transplanting hair or relying solely on pharmaceuticals, Micro Channeling works by creating precise, controlled micro-injuries in the scalp. These micro channels stimulate a cascade of healing responses, activating stem cells, increasing blood flow, and encouraging the production of collagen and growth factors within the tissue.

When paired with targeted growth factor serums, this process creates an optimal environment for hair follicles to strengthen, repair, and, in many cases, re-enter the active growth phase.

The result is not an artificial or forced outcome, but a gradual, natural improvement in hair density, thickness, and overall scalp health.

Why Micro channeling Works

At its core, micro channeling leverages one of the body's most powerful capabilities: its ability to heal.

When the skin experiences controlled micro-injury, it initiates a highly orchestrated response involving platelets, cytokines, and growth factors. In the scalp, this response is particularly valuable because it directly impacts the hair follicle environment.

Hair follicles thrive in conditions of:

- Strong vascular support (blood flow)
- Healthy extracellular matrix
- Balanced inflammatory response
- Active growth signaling

Over time, factors such as stress, hormonal shifts, and reduced circulation can disrupt this environment,

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leading to miniaturization of the follicle, a hallmark of thinning hair.

Micro channeling helps reverse this trend by:

- Increasing circulation to the scalp
- Enhancing nutrient delivery
- Stimulating dormant follicles
- Improving absorption of topical growth factors

Unlike traditional microneedling, Procell's stamping technique creates uniform channels without dragging or tearing the skin. This distinction is especially important in scalp treatments, where unnecessary inflammation can further stress already compromised follicles. By minimizing trauma while maximizing precision, micro channeling creates a more controlled healing response, one that supports regeneration without overstimulation.

Why Men Are an Ideal Candidate—But an Underserved Market

Here's where things get especially interesting from both a treatment and business perspective.

Men are, statistically, one of the most compliant client groups when it comes to consistent routines, once they commit. When they find something that works, they tend to stick with it. They are loyal, results-driven, and often prefer straightforward, no-nonsense protocols.

If you've been looking for creative ways to build new revenue streams or attract new clients, expanding into men's services can be a powerful addition to your spa menu. Hair restoration, in particular, serves as a natural entry point, opening the door to ongoing, relationship-based services such as maintenance facials or even body waxing.

However, many traditional hair restoration options fail to appeal to them for several reasons:

- Perceived complexity
- Fear of invasive procedures
- Social stigma or discomfort
- Lengthy downtime or visible recovery

Micro Channeling removes many of these barriers.

Treatments are relatively quick, require minimal downtime, and can be positioned as a practical,

solution-oriented service rather than a cosmetic indulgence. For men who may never walk into a med spa for injectables or surgical consultations, this creates an accessible entry point into aesthetic care.

And once they're in? Retention tends to be strong. When the initial phase is complete, you can offer maintenance sessions, often spaced every six to twelve months, to help preserve and extend both your results and your relationship. When approached as a strategic, layered process rather than a quick fix, hair restoration can quickly help you attract a whole new demographic of men.

The Treatment Experience: What to Expect

One of the most compelling aspects of Procell Micro Channeling is its simplicity, from both the provider and client perspectives.

A typical protocol involves a series of treatments spaced several weeks apart, combined with a home care regimen designed to support and extend results. The procedure itself is well-tolerated, with most clients describing the sensation as mild to moderate but manageable. Best of all, results can be seen even after the first session and build as you go. Taking great progress photos of new growth and overall look of density is great for keeping excitement and momentum to complete the treatments. Photos are also crucial in marketing this service and can easily be taken so as not to identify the client.

Post-treatment, clients may experience slight redness or sensitivity, but downtime is minimal compared to more aggressive interventions. This is a key selling point for men who want results without disruption to their daily routine.

Over the course of treatments, clients often begin to notice:

- Reduced shedding
- Improved hair texture
- Increased density in thinning areas
- Healthier scalp condition overall

One of the most important, and often overlooked, factors in hair restoration is not just the treatment itself, but how it is performed and supported over time. Consistency and technique play a critical role in outcomes. While some protocols space treatments further apart, many advanced practitioners like Procell Expert Jessica McAteer have found that more frequent sessions, approximately every two weeks, can help stimulate the follicle more effectively, particularly in the early stages of treatment. Every client is different, and this is why thorough training is necessary to fully understand all treatment variations and protocols. Using the appropriate depth is equally important. For scalp applications, a 0.5 mm tip is often ideal, as it allows for targeted stimulation at the level of the follicle where stem cell activity is most impactful.

Preparation and aftercare are also essential components of a successful outcome. Jessica warns, "Clients should avoid potential irritants, harsh products and scalp exfoliants, in the days leading up to treatment, and minimize sun exposure to keep the scalp in a calm, receptive state." Following treatment, there is a brief but important window where the micro channels remain open and highly absorbent. During this time, it's critical to avoid touching the scalp, excessive heat, or strenuous activity, as these can interfere with both healing and product absorption. Even simple habits, like waiting 24 hours before washing the hair can significantly influence results.

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Results build progressively, reinforcing consistency and encouraging long-term engagement. Keep in mind that Procell does not work for everyone, so if no results are seen after the second treatment the company suggests discontinuing the series. Micro Channeling can be highly effective, but client selection does play a critical role in outcomes. The best candidates are typically those in the early to moderate stages of hair thinning, where follicles are still active but underperforming. Clients experiencing complete follicle loss or long-standing baldness may see limited results, as the treatment relies on stimulating existing biological structures rather than creating new ones.

Setting these expectations early not only improves satisfaction but reinforces your role as a knowledgeable, result-driven provider.

Positioning the Service: Language Matters

How you present hair restoration to male clients can significantly impact conversion. This is not a market that typically responds to overly aesthetic or beauty-driven messaging. Instead, framing the treatment in terms of performance, function, and results tends to resonate more strongly.

Think:

- "Strengthening the follicle environment"
- "Improving scalp health for better hair growth"
- "Supporting natural regeneration"

This subtle shift in language can make the difference between hesitation and buy-in. Instead of framing the issue as something to "fix," it becomes something to optimize, bringing the client into a mindset of improvement rather than insecurity. It allows the service to feel aligned with wellness and self-optimization, categories that are increasingly relevant to male consumers, and it helps remove the emotional weight often associated with hair loss conversations.

The Profit Potential

Of course, these treatments can also be done for women with thinning hair, but men's hair restoration represents a largely untapped revenue stream for

many estheticians and spa owners. While significant resources are often devoted to facial treatments, body services, and female-focused offerings, male clients remain under-marketed despite their strong potential lifetime value.

Consider the advantages:

- High retention rates
- Strong compliance with treatment plans
- Willingness to invest in visible results
- Lower likelihood of "treatment hopping"

Procell devices are easy to purchase, have affordable pricing and discounted intro kits. All devices come with hands on training and support from a local representative as well and at my business, Beautique Salon, Spa & Lash Lounge, we are constantly utilizing all the resources and support they provide.

Promotion of a service like micro channeling, which naturally lends itself to a series-based model, makes revenue potential even more compelling. Going further to add complementary services to your menu like Red Light Therapy or retailing

Light therapy units or needle stampers for maintenance can build a whole niche for this service at your spa.

With hair restoration, supporting clients on their journey at home is crucial, making retail selling part of the total package, and another big revenue boost. Hair restoration is not a one-time event, but a process that relies on ongoing stimulation and support. The use of targeted, stem-cell-based serums at home can dramatically enhance outcomes when applied consistently and correctly. Applying these serums to a clean scalp, allowing adequate absorption time, and integrating them into a nightly routine help reinforce the regenerative signals initiated during in-office treatments. It also gets men in the habit of daily routines that can be expanded into skin care as well.

The bottom line is, this service meets clients where they are: Curious, aware, but not necessarily ready for extremes. And in doing so, it opens the door to earlier intervention, arguably one of the most important factors in successful hair restoration.

As the industry continues to evolve, the demand for treatments that are effective, approachable, and aligned with the body's natural processes will only grow. Men's hair restoration is poised to be a major part of that evolution.

Not because it's new, but because it's finally becoming accessible. For providers, this represents an opportunity not just to expand services, but to redefine how hair loss is addressed entirely. Offering solutions that feel practical rather than overwhelming, results-driven rather than risky, and regenerative rather than invasive. And the result? You position yourself at the forefront of a rapidly growing niche.

For this new generation of male clients, it offers something they've been quietly looking for all along: A solution that feels practical. A process that feels approachable. And results that feel natural, not forced. Because the future of hair restoration isn't about chasing extremes, it's about meeting clients earlier, supporting the body intelligently, and redefining what's possible before the point of no return.



Shawna Rocha is the owner and founder of Awaken Esthetics Retreat and Awaken Day Spa in California and Washington. A licensed esthetician, mentor and educational development consultant, Rocha is dedicated to elevating the esthetics industry through advanced education and community. Specializing in sensitive and compromised skin, she holds multiple advanced certifications, including Oncology Esthetics, Immuno-Esthetics and NCEA certification. She is an educational consultant for multiple skin care lines; Rocha was named Dermascope's 2024 Educator of the Year. Known for her expertise, passion and mentorship, she continues to inspire estheticians nationwide through education, collaboration and advocacy for skin health.

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RETHINKING COMPROMISED SKIN: BUILDING CAPACITY BEFORE CORRECTION

By Lashelle Ullie

Compromised skin is often approached as a category, but in clinical practice, it is better understood as a condition of function.

It can present as atopic dermatitis, eczema, rosacea, post-procedure sensitivity, oncology-impacted skin, or chronic barrier disruption. While these conditions vary in appearance, they share a common underlying reality: impaired barrier function, persistent inflammation, and a reduced ability for the skin to repair itself efficiently.

In my treatment room, I see this most clearly in my male clientele.

Men frequently present with compromised skin that goes unrecognized—pseudofolliculitis barbae, chronic ingrown hairs, v, dehydration masked by excess oil and barrier damage from repeated shaving or over-cleansing. These are often treated as isolated concerns, when in reality they reflect a deeper imbalance in the skin's overall function.

The traditional response has been to intensify treatment—stronger exfoliation, more aggressive correction, faster results. But compromised skin does not respond well to urgency. It responds to capacity.

From Correction to Capacity

Before initiating any corrective treatment, I assess what I refer to as the skin's dermal reserve—its ability to tolerate stimulation, regenerate at a cellular level, and maintain stability after intervention.

Barrier dysfunction is not solely a topical issue. It often reflects broader systemic influences, including immune response, inflammation, and overall health. Conditions such as eczema and atopic dermatitis are closely tied to immune dysregulation, while oncology-related skin changes are a direct result of systemic treatments affecting cellular turnover.

This understanding requires a shift in approach: from asking what to do to the skin, to understanding what the skin is capable of receiving.

A Holistic Framework for Skin Health

My methodology is rooted in what I describe as a HOLI-SCHN approach—Holistic Skin, Health, and Nourishment.

This framework positions the skin as an extension of overall health rather than a standalone concern. In practice, this means guiding clients to view their skin as part of their primary care—not just their appearance.

Education is a critical component of this process. I encourage clients to work in collaboration with their broader healthcare network, including primary care physicians, dermatologists, allergists, and oncologists, when appropriate. This allows for the development of treatment plans that support—not conflict with—prescribed medications, medical treatments, or internal health conditions.

Understanding how to properly layer, or "sandwich," professional treatments with medical protocols is essential in achieving both safe and sustainable outcomes.

Dermal Reserve: Supporting Function at the Cellular Level

This philosophy is reflected in my product, Dermal Reserve, which was developed to support compromised skin at both the surface and cellular level.

Formulated with hyaluronic acid and 0.25% retinol, it is designed to restore hydration while encouraging controlled cellular renewal:

- Hyaluronic acid improves water retention and supports barrier integrity
- Low-dose retinol (0.25%) promotes cellular turnover and collagen signaling in a measured, tolerable way

In compromised skin, the goal is not aggressive correction, but gradual restoration of function. When introduced appropriately, this combination helps rebuild the skin's tolerance, improve communication at the cellular level, and support long-term resilience.

Protocol as Strategy

For practitioners, treating compromised skin requires a shift from routine-based treatments to strategic protocol design.

In my practice, this often includes:

- Lymphatic sculpting to reduce inflammation and support circulation
- Hydrodermabrasion for gentle exfoliation and hydration without barrier disruption
- Radiofrequency (RF) introduced selectively to support dermal function
- Cold therapy to calm inflammation and reinforce barrier integrity

Each step is intentional. Stimulation is always followed by restoration.

Male Clients and the Future of Skin Health

Compromised skin is no longer a niche concern. It is increasingly the result of modern skincare practices, environmental stressors, and the disconnect between internal health and external treatment.

As professionals, our responsibility is to evolve accordingly. This means prioritizing:

- Skin capacity over rapid correction
- Functional health over temporary results
- Education and collaboration over isolated treatment

When we build dermal reserve, align with the body's internal systems, and approach the skin through a holistic lens, we create outcomes that are not only visible—but sustainable.

And in doing so, we redefine the role of skincare as an integral part of overall health.



Lashelle Ullie is a licensed skin health professional and integrative esthetician committed to promoting holistic wellness for men. By combining conventional and complementary treatment strategies, he helps men achieve optimal health by addressing the root causes that impact their overall well-being. His exceptional commitment to excellence has earned him a stellar reputation and celebrity clientele, including Kelly Rowland, Toni Braxton, Emma Watson, and numerous other entertainment insiders. With over 20 years of experience, Lashelle's passion for integrated health has led him to build a network of health professionals from various therapeutic modalities, working together to improve the quality of life for men.

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ACNE CARE UNDER PRESSURE: HOW ESTHETICIANS STAY EFFECTIVE WITHOUT CROSSING THE LINE

By Susanne Schmaling

Working with acne clients is a core part of professional esthetics. For many of us, it's also personal. My own experience with cystic acne and PCOS is what brought me into this field, and after nearly three decades treating acne across solo practice, spa and medically aligned environments, one thing is clear: acne is never simple.

It demands critical thinking, strong analysis and true personalization. This is where estheticians excel. It's also exactly why acne now sits in a more sensitive regulatory space than ever before.

Acne is rarely just one issue. Hormones, barrier function, home care, medications, inflammation, pigment response, lifestyle and treatment tolerance all show up at once. That complexity is what makes us valuable. It's also what requires us to be more precise, clinically and legally, than we've ever been.

What's Changing in Acne Care

We're seeing continued expansion in acne research. Topicals, microbiome-focused approaches, device-based treatments and scar revision all continue to evolve. Our clients are better educated and looking at how their entire lifestyle impacts their acne, bringing the whole "wellness" approach to acne care.

Core OTC ingredients like benzoyl peroxide, salicylic acid, and adapalene remain foundational. At the same time, we're seeing more interest in combination retinoids, microbiome modulation and energy-based technologies.

Here's the reality, though: innovation doesn't equal access. Many of the modalities clients ask for, things like microneedling, lasers, non-invasive devices, and aggressive resurfacing, may sit outside the esthetic scope depending on your state. Demand is increasing, but so is scrutiny. If you're not evaluating every modality through a regulatory lens first, you're exposed.

Acne at the Fault Line Between Beauty and Medicine

Acne lives right at the intersection of beauty and medicine. Medically, it's a chronic inflammatory disease of the pilosebaceous unit. In practice, much of the consistent, day-to-day support happens with us, through cleansing, exfoliation (where appropriate), extractions (where allowed), barrier repair and ongoing client coaching.

The legal line matters. Under federal law, cosmetics are intended to cleanse or improve appearance. Drugs are intended to treat or prevent disease or affect the structure or function of the body. Because acne is a disease, language like "treat" or "clear acne" can shift what you're doing into drug territory.

Most state esthetics licenses authorize cosmetic services, not medical diagnosis or treatment. That creates the gray zone we're all operating in: we can improve the appearance of acne and support skin health, but our language, intent and claims must stay within cosmetic scope. This isn't semantics. It's compliance.

New Regulatory Pressure You Can't Ignore

MoCRA (Modernization of Cosmetics Regulation Act) changed the landscape. It introduced:

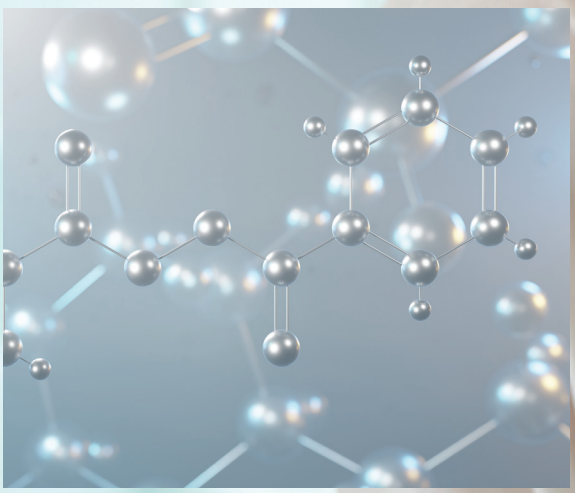
- Facility registration
- Product listing
- Safety substantiation requirements
- Adverse event reporting
- Expanded FDA oversight

While this primarily applies to manufacturers, it directly impacts the products we use and recommend.

What this means in practice:

You should expect better documentation from your vendors. Safety data, ingredient transparency and clear adverse-event protocols are required. If something goes wrong with a product, there is now a more formal regulatory trail.

We're also seeing increased scrutiny on ingredients. The benzene concerns tied to benzoyl peroxide products are a good example. Even long-standing ingredients can become compliance and trust issues overnight. Staying informed is more important now than ever; misinformation has now become a professional liability.



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State Scope can Shift Fast

States are actively revisiting esthetic scope, especially around devices and advanced procedures. If you want to understand how quickly scope can shift, look at New York. New York's medical board has recently implemented a regulatory ruling that just prohibited supervision for device use such as lasers. With one board decision, thousands of Med Spa owners, estheticians working in the field and their clients have been adversely effected.

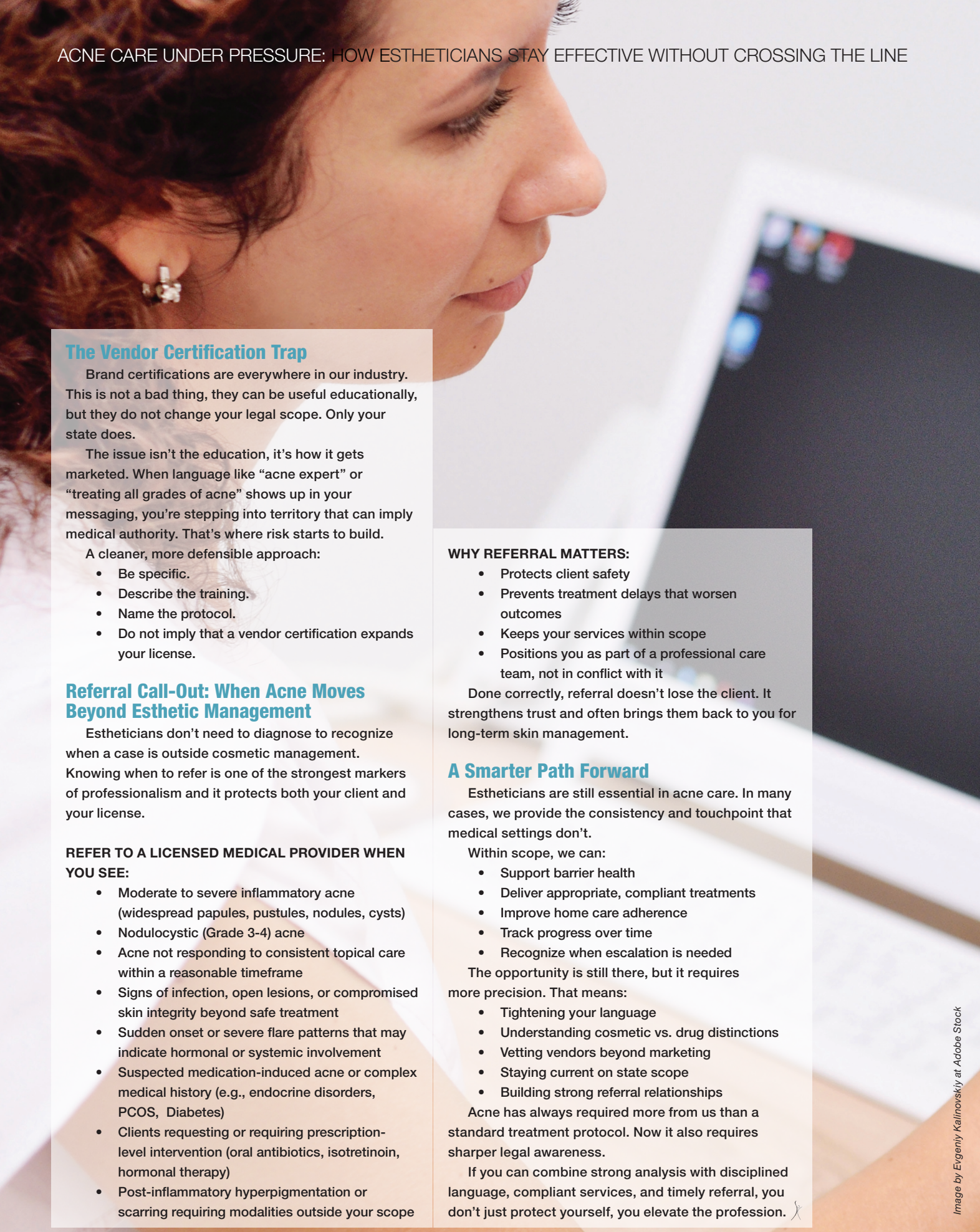
This creates a moving target. A service that is:

- In a grey area or allowed today can be prohibited tomorrow.

This is exactly where practitioners get into trouble and where our clients get hurt. Acne treatment requires consistency and, quite frankly, can be very expensive. We are essential to true skin health coaching care. In acne specifically, this shows up with modalities like:

- Microneedling
- Energy-based devices
- Advanced resurfacing

These are often the most in-demand treatments for acne and acne scarring and the most legally complex. Every acne-focused service or device needs to be evaluated against your state law first. Not what you saw at a show, not what a brand trained you on and not what another state allows.



The Vendor Certification Trap

Brand certifications are everywhere in our industry. This is not a bad thing, they can be useful educationally, but they do not change your legal scope. Only your state does.

The issue isn't the education, it's how it gets marketed. When language like "acne expert" or "treating all grades of acne" shows up in your messaging, you're stepping into territory that can imply medical authority. That's where risk starts to build.

A cleaner, more defensible approach:

- Be specific.
- Describe the training.
- Name the protocol.
- Do not imply that a vendor certification expands your license.

Referral Call-Out: When Acne Moves Beyond Esthetic Management

Estheticians don't need to diagnose to recognize when a case is outside cosmetic management. Knowing when to refer is one of the strongest markers of professionalism and it protects both your client and your license.

REFER TO A LICENSED MEDICAL PROVIDER WHEN YOU SEE:

- Moderate to severe inflammatory acne (widespread papules, pustules, nodules, cysts)
- Nodulocystic (Grade 3-4) acne
- Acne not responding to consistent topical care within a reasonable timeframe
- Signs of infection, open lesions, or compromised skin integrity beyond safe treatment
- Sudden onset or severe flare patterns that may indicate hormonal or systemic involvement
- Suspected medication-induced acne or complex medical history (e.g., endocrine disorders, PCOS, Diabetes)
- Clients requesting or requiring prescription-level intervention (oral antibiotics, isotretinoin, hormonal therapy)
- Post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation or scarring requiring modalities outside your scope

WHY REFERRAL MATTERS:

- Protects client safety
- Prevents treatment delays that worsen outcomes
- Keeps your services within scope
- Positions you as part of a professional care team, not in conflict with it

Done correctly, referral doesn't lose the client. It strengthens trust and often brings them back to you for long-term skin management.

A Smarter Path Forward

Estheticians are still essential in acne care. In many cases, we provide the consistency and touchpoint that medical settings don't.

Within scope, we can:

- Support barrier health
- Deliver appropriate, compliant treatments
- Improve home care adherence
- Track progress over time
- Recognize when escalation is needed

The opportunity is still there, but it requires more precision. That means:

- Tightening your language
- Understanding cosmetic vs. drug distinctions
- Vetting vendors beyond marketing
- Staying current on state scope
- Building strong referral relationships

Acne has always required more from us than a standard treatment protocol. Now it also requires sharper legal awareness.

If you can combine strong analysis with disciplined language, compliant services, and timely referral, you don't just protect yourself, you elevate the profession.

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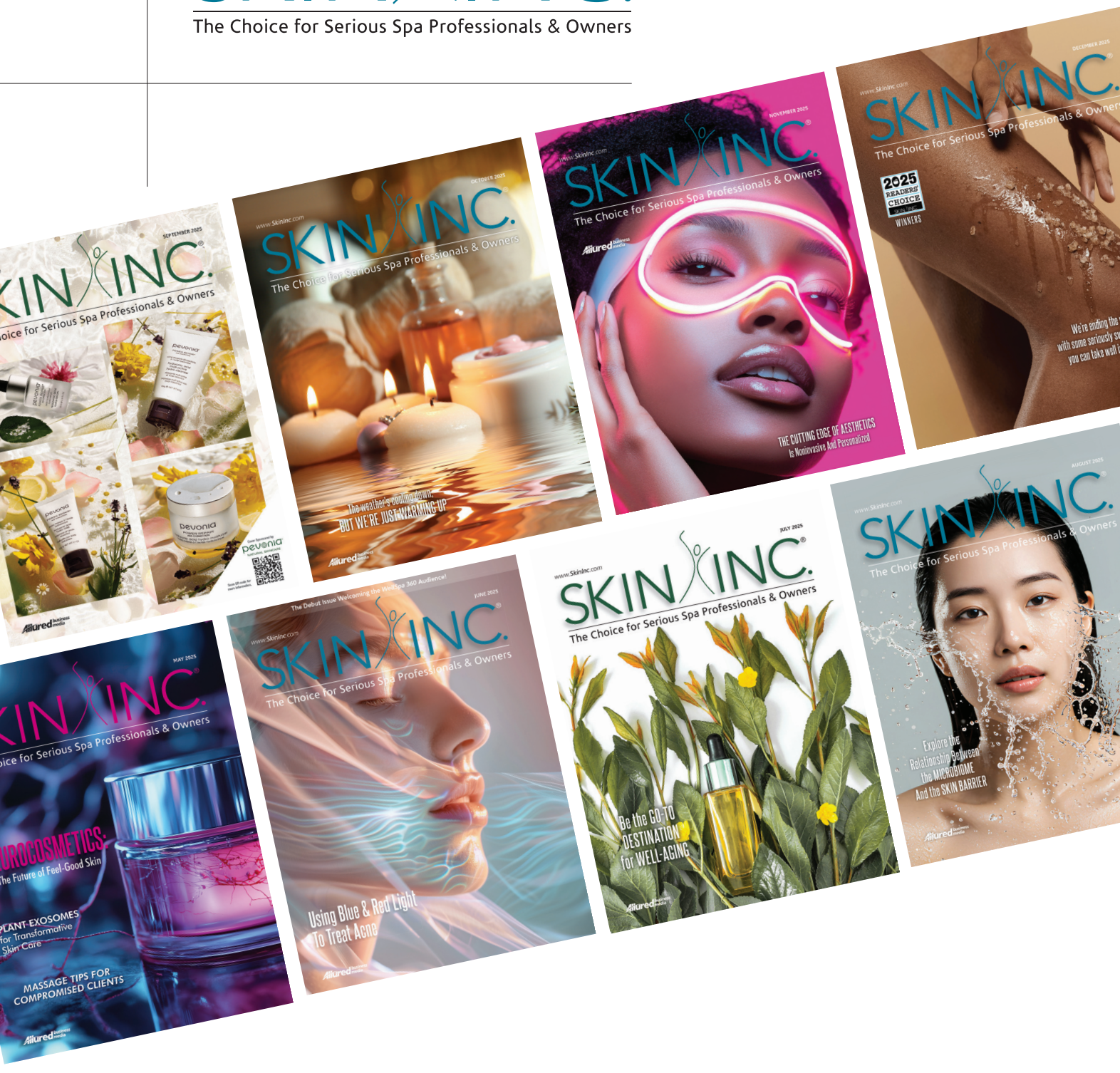

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