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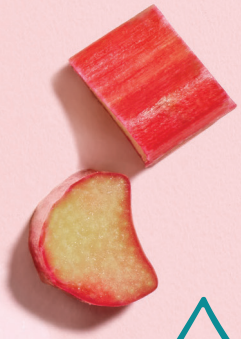



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EDITORIAL

Content Director	Emmanuel Henderson	630-344-6020	ehenderson@allured.com
Assoc. Managing Editor	Tia Jones	630-344-6040	tjones@allured.com

ADVERTISING SALES

Group Publisher	Jeb Gleason-Allured	630-344-6069	jallured@allured.com
New Business Development Manager	Perri Polowy	630-344-6075	ppolowy@allured.com
Creative Marketing/Ad Production Specialist	Sarah Slivinski	630-344-6057	sslivinski@allured.com
Business Intelligence Specialist	Ethan Grisham	630-344-6068	egrisham@allured.com

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Audience Development Manager	Sam Attebery	sattebery@allured.com
Subscriber Customer Service	skininc@allured.com	

DESIGN

Assistant Design Manager	James Fergus
Graphic Designer	Gabrielle Gearhart

CORPORATE

Partner & CEO	George Fox
Partner & President	Janet Ludwig
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TIA JONES
Associate
Managing Editor
tjones@allured.com

Embracing Change and Transformation

Skin Inc.'s Associate Managing Editor Tia Jones shares what's on her mind.

Fall is here. In the same way the colors of the leaves are changing, skincare is also making its transition from lightweight products to heavier, more hydrating formulas. The change in season can signal a change in the skin's texture. A lot of professionals see fall as the start of peel season, a time when there is less sun exposure, which makes it perfect for chemical peels and treatments that help with hyperpigmentation.

In line with the theme of change and transformation, professionals are trying to keep up with the changes in their client's skin, either because of weight loss or hormones. This issue will focus on organic and luxury skincare, ways estheticians can grow their business going into 2027, the best approach for chemical peels and how to maximize the results of a chemical peel while protecting the skin barrier.

Wishing you all the best,

Tia Jones



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Not So Heavy Lifting

By Tia Jones

It seems like everyone is looking for something that can give them a lift, whether it is a body lotion that firms, making eyelashes longer, and/or anti-aging skincare that lifts and firms.

1 **Body lotion that lifts and firms**
With all the talk about how GLP-1's affects the skin's elasticity, people are looking for products that lift and firm. VOL.U.LIFT Body from Image Skincare addresses skin laxity and overtime the skin will appear more hydrated and the crepiness will be reduced.
www.imageskincare.com

2 **Natural looking lash lift**
The Korean Lash Lift boasts a more natural lash lift that softens and relaxes the natural lash structure first, then sets the lash into its final shape. It can also be ideal for lash clients who have stubborn, downward growing or resistant lashes.
www.elleebanastoreusa.com

3 **Serum that supports skin structure and shape**
While anti-aging products are not new, products that firm and support skin structure and shape have become an area of focus. The ZO Skin Health Firming Serum hydrates and supports the visible improvement in the skin's elasticity and firmness.
www.zoskinhealth.com

4 **Eye creams that firm**
Eye creams are a useful part of a skincare routine and can address fine lines, wrinkles and dark circles. The Good Molecules Firming Peptide Eye Cream smooths fine lines and wrinkles, while also brightening the appearance of dark circles. It also helps improve around the eyes and gives a more lifted, radiant and youthful appearance.
www.goodmolecules.com



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Copper Peptide Restore Cream
Global Beauty Private Label Skincare

This luxury treatment moisturizer is designed to support the appearance of skin renewal, resilience, and visible rejuvenation following professional treatments and daily environmental stress. Powered by Multi-Peptide Technology, including copper peptides, this formula helps promote the look of firmer, smoother skin while supporting optimal moisture balance and barrier function. A biomimetic lipid complex delivers deep nourishment, helping to comfort compromised skin. With a luxurious, therapeutic texture, this cream bridges clinical performance with an elevated sensory experience, ideal for post-procedure care and daily correction-focused regimens.
www.globalbeauty.com

Product image courtesy of the manufacturers

Elina Fedotova

By Tia Jones



Elina Fedotova

Elina Fedotova is the Founder and Chief Formulator of Elina Organics. The Fort Lauderdale-based cosmetic chemist and master licensed esthetician founded the holistic and clinical skincare spa in 1998. She founded the Association of Holistic Skin Care Practitioners (AHSCP) in 2007 and is the president of the organization, which provides holistic skincare training and education for professionals. Fedotova answered questions about her journey as a cosmetic chemist, licensed esthetician and founder and president of AHSCP.

***Skin Inc.*: What led you to becoming a cosmetic chemist?**

Elina Fedotova: My mother was a chemist and attorney, and my father held a Ph.D. in chemical engineering. Although my parents had strong scientific backgrounds, my mother always emphasized natural living. We wore natural fibers, avoided artificial colors in our food, and embraced a clean, healthy lifestyle. Growing up with those values had a profound impact on me.

As a teenager, I struggled with oily, acne-prone skin and became determined to find a solution without relying on harsh medications. I turned to the herbal remedies I had grown up with in Russia and was amazed by how effectively nature helped restore my skin. That experience inspired me to combine science with nature in my search for effective skincare solutions. I went on to study chemistry so I could better understand how botanical ingredients work and combine the wisdom of traditional herbal medicine with modern cosmetic science. That passion ultimately led me to create Elina Organics, where I continue to handcraft every product in small batches using fresh, organic ingredients and scientifically proven methods.

***SI*: How did you decide to develop your own skin care line?**

EF: After studying chemistry and seeing firsthand how powerful natural ingredients could be, I realized there was a gap in the skincare industry. I worked with another skincare company, and while I gained valuable experience, I wasn't satisfied with the products I was using professionally. I wanted cleaner formulations that could penetrate the skin effectively, deliver active ingredients where they were needed most, and produce real, lasting results. Many products relied on synthetic ingredients, preservatives, and fillers that didn't truly nourish the skin. I wanted to create something different—fresh, handcrafted skincare made with organic botanicals and highly active ingredients that work in harmony with the skin. I began formulating products in small batches, combining traditional herbal wisdom with modern cosmetic science. As more people experienced healthier skin and shared their results, my passion grew into what is now Elina Organics. My goal has always been to create skincare that is both holistic and results driven, helping people achieve healthy, beautiful skin naturally.

***SI*: Why is it important for you to hand make Elina Organics in small batches opposed to having someone else handle the making of the products?**

EF: It is very important to me that every Elina Organics product is handcrafted in small batches because freshness and quality directly affect performance. Many natural ingredients lose their potency over time, especially without heavy synthetic preservatives. Our formulas are very delicate and are preserved naturally, so making them fresh in small batches helps ensure they remain as effective as possible. I often compare it to dining at a restaurant that prepares fresh meals versus eating frozen food. Fresh is almost always better, especially when you're working with organic ingredients. By handcrafting our products in small batches, I can ensure that every formula contains the highest concentration of active botanicals at their peak effectiveness. I also personally oversee every stage of the formulation process to maintain the quality and consistency I expect. I have spent decades perfecting these formulations, and I don't believe they should be mass-produced or outsourced. Small-batch production allows us to carefully select seasonal ingredients, make adjustments when nature varies, and create

Images courtesy of Elina Fedotova; chamillew at AdobeStock

skincare that truly nourishes the skin with the freshest, most effective ingredients possible. I believe skincare should be made with the same care and attention as preparing a healthy meal—fresh, purposeful, and made with integrity.

***SI*: What products are included in the skin care line?**

EF: My product line includes sulfate-free cleansers and toners made from botanical extracts and essential oils. I offer a variety of treatment serums containing natural peptides, as well as acids and enzymes derived from fruits and plants. I also incorporate marine ingredients, along with spicules and extracts from both freshwater and oceanic sponges.

I created a unique category of skincare products called Elixirs, which originated from my gemstone collection featuring genuine amber extract, amethyst powder, and other mineral ingredients. These corrective serums have the lightweight consistency of a lotion while delivering highly concentrated active ingredients. They can be used alone as a moisturizer for normal to oily skin or paired with a richer cream for drier complexions.

My line also includes day and night moisturizers, as well as makeup formulated with zinc oxide. Zinc oxide not only provides natural coverage but also helps protect the skin from UV damage while calming irritation and supporting the skin's healing process. It is well known for its soothing, antibacterial, healing, and broad-spectrum UV-protective properties.



In addition, I offer a wide variety of masks and scrubs for home care, along with an extensive professional treatment line. Many of my professional masks and acids are available in concentrated powder form, allowing estheticians to activate them with water and customize the strength of each treatment. These powders can also be blended together to create unique, personalized formulas tailored to each client's individual skin concerns and desired results.

***SI*: What is the most popular product in the line?**

EF: We have champion products in every category. For example, in our serum collection, Oil Control Formula is one of our most popular products. It is incredibly effective for acne-prone complexions and contains natural salicylic acid derived from black willow bark, blended with cooling and calming herbs to help balance the skin.

Those with extremely dry and sensitive skin often can't live without Angelite Elixir, which contains tremella mushroom extract and copper peptides to deeply hydrate, soothe, and support skin repair.

In our Elixir collection, Ambra Lift Elixir is one of our best sellers because it delivers real, visible results while helping stimulate collagen production and improve skin firmness. It contains Baltic amber extract and has been scientifically proven through gene expression testing to increase the activity of Sirtuin-1, a key anti-aging gene associated with cellular longevity. Independent testing also showed a significant increase in collagen production after just two applications over 48 hours, along with the activation of genes responsible for antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and anti-wrinkle effects. This is one of the reasons Ambra Lift has become such a favorite among both skincare professionals and clients looking for natural products backed by science.

We also can barely keep Super Antioxidant Night Cream and Skin Smoothie Moisturizer. on our shelves. Both are deeply hydrating and protective while infusing the skin with powerful antioxidants that help reduce hyperpigmentation without relying on acids. Antioxidants help balance melanocyte activity and restore the skin at the cellular level, leaving the complexion healthier, brighter, and more resilient.

***SI*: How have people responded to the Elina Organics products?**

EF: We still have clients who first started using Elina Organics in 1997, and nearly 30 years later, these women look absolutely beautiful and love how their skin has aged naturally. Many of our clients live a holistic lifestyle and choose not to rely on surgical procedures or injectables. Instead, they visit us regularly for our corrective herbal facials and advanced holistic skincare treatments, allowing them to maintain healthy, youthful, glowing skin naturally.

When we celebrated the 25th anniversary of Elina Organics, we interviewed several clients who had been with us since the very beginning and shared their stories and unretouched photos. Several were in their 70s and 80s, and everyone could see their beautiful, radiant complexions. They were proud to share their natural results, and we were honored to celebrate their skincare journeys.

***SI*: You are also the President of the Association of Holistic Skin Care Practitioners. How does that organization fit into the work you do as a cosmetic chemist and a master esthetician?**

EF: In 2007, I founded the Association of Holistic Skincare Practitioners to help distinguish truly holistic skincare from conventional skincare and treatments. My goal was to create an educational organization for professionals who want to learn the principles of holistic beauty and wellness while gaining a deeper understanding of the skincare benefits of botanicals and other natural ingredients.

I didn't want this education to be available only to Elina Organics spa partners. I wanted all estheticians and skincare professionals to have access to this knowledge, which is why I chose to establish the Association as a separate organization from Elina Organics.

Education has always been one of my greatest passions. For many years, I have hosted conferences, workshops, and advanced training events featuring some of the leading experts in holistic health and skincare. One of those experts was Dr. Alan Dattner, one of the first holistic dermatologists, who was a speaker at our educational events. My goal has always been to create a community where professionals can continue learning, growing, and elevating the standards of holistic skincare.

Tia Jones is Associate Managing Editor of *Skin Inc.*



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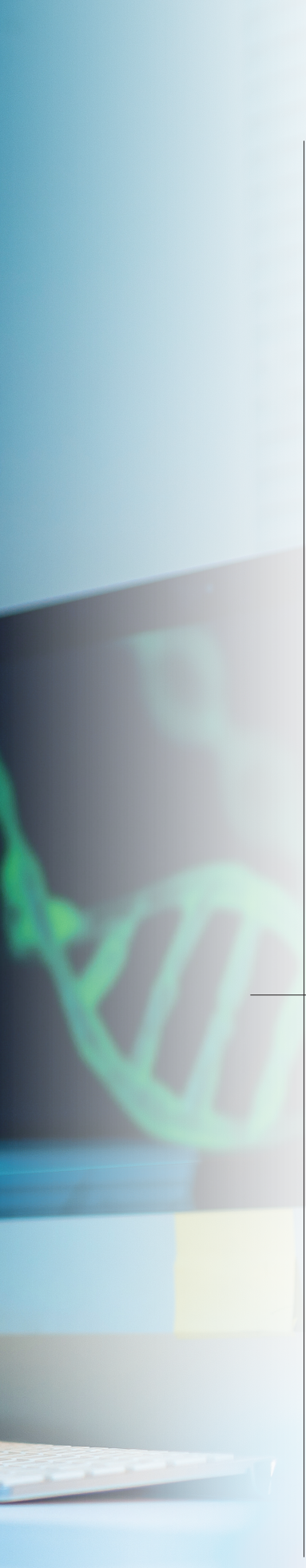

POWER TO THE PEPTIDES

By Erin Madigan-Fleck

The esthetic industry has seen significant technological advancements, fueled by a better understanding of skin physiology and an increasing demand for innovative products. This has led to new research techniques, active ingredients, and delivery systems, transforming our understanding of the impact of cosmetics on skin health. These advances have ushered in a new era of scientifically formulated products designed to treat a wider range of skin concerns and conditions. Originally intended solely to enhance personal appearance through direct skin application, cosmetics now serve a broader purpose and are more dynamic.

Peptides are a class of cosmetic compounds that are thriving in innovation and have attracted significant interest from many experts. Peptides first entered the realm of cosmetic chemistry in 1973, when Dr. Loren Pickart identified and introduced the synthetic copper peptide GHK (Glycyl-L-Histidyl-L-Lysine) as a signaling peptide capable of stimulating collagen synthesis. This significant advancement laid the groundwork for the recognition of bioactive peptides in skincare, although widespread commercial application took several additional decades to materialize. In 1993, the pentapeptide KTTKS, derived from type I procollagen, was identified for its ability to stimulate extracellular matrix production, and it was subsequently adopted in anti-aging skincare products. In the early 2000s, lipopeptides (such as Matrixyl/Palmitoyl Pentapeptide-4) signaled that peptides could effectively penetrate the skin barrier.

The search for ingredients with strong biocompatibility and bioactivity has driven their use in cosmetic formulations. Peptides are innovative active ingredients that can enhance collagen production, promote skin cell growth, reduce inflammation, and more. Enhancing peptide bioavailability and stability to improve delivery to target sites and achieve noticeable effects has become a key focus in recent research, given the potential benefits.

Moreover, new nanosized formulations such as liposomes, niosomes, ethosomes, nanoemulsions, and other nanomaterials have been created to reduce skin irritation and boost product effectiveness. [1.,2.]

Structural Marvels—Bioactive Peptides

Proteins are large molecules composed of long chains of amino acids and are classified by their amino acid composition. These chains are linked by peptide bonds and disulfide bonds between cysteine residues. Proteins typically contain 100 to 10,000 amino acids and include structural and fibrous types found in skin, tendons, bones, and muscles. Amino acids are vital for dermal and epidermal structures, aiding in the production of extracellular proteins and enzymes essential for the epidermal barrier. The key amino acids for human nutrition include arginine, histidine, leucine, isoleucine, lysine, methionine, phenylalanine, threonine, tryptophan, and valine. Nonessential amino acids, which derive from essential amino acids, include carnitine, cysteine, glutamine, taurine, and tyrosine. Complete proteins contain all essential amino acids, while incomplete proteins lack one or more. Since humans cannot synthesize these essential amino acids, they must be obtained through diet or supplements. Additionally, dietary proteins should provide adequate quality and quantity of amino acids to maintain an appropriate amino acid profile.

Protein sources in foods play many important physicochemical roles beyond simply providing nutrients. Many of these roles are carried out by peptide sequences hidden within the "parent protein." Parent proteins are the original, full-length polypeptide chain that a cell synthesizes before it is broken down into smaller, functional segments, which are then called peptides. Bioactive peptides are specific amino acid sequences within proteins that offer health benefits and influence physiological functions beyond nutrition. They help regulate biological processes, including exhibiting antimicrobial activity, modulating immune responses, providing antioxidant protection, and binding minerals. Their functionality depends on their amino acid sequences, which enable interactions with other proteins and influence natural body functions. Most of these peptides are composed of 2 to 20 amino acids. [3]

TLC for the ECM

Bioactive peptides are mainly divided into two types: endogenous and exogenous. Endogenous peptides are produced within various cell types, such as neural and immune cells, as well as in glands like the pituitary and adrenal glands. In contrast, exogenous peptides come from sources outside the body, including foods,

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supplements, and medicines. These bioactive peptides have specific roles, exerting meaningful biological effects that can enhance health or support bodily functions. As a result, they have attracted significant interest for their potential to improve health, and, economically, they play crucial roles in the development of functional foods, pharmaceuticals, and related products.

Once proteins are broken down into dipeptides and tripeptides, they become small enough to pass through the intestinal wall. They are absorbed into intestinal cells through specialized transporters, then enter the systemic circulation and are distributed throughout the body. These circulating food peptides function as signaling molecules that activate pathways, such as TGF-β signaling, prompting cells to produce their own structural proteins. This process initiates matrix remodeling as cells produce and organize new collagen, elastin, and hyaluronic acid to support and repair the extracellular matrix. Bioactive peptides in the ECM are short amino acid sequences naturally found within structural proteins like collagen and elastin. When released via enzymatic degradation, they act as essential biochemical signals that regulate cell behavior, promote tissue repair, and stimulate matrix protein regeneration.

These peptides serve as the ECM's communication network, driving biological responses through several key mechanisms:

- Matrikines: Peptides derived from structural proteins such as collagen actively signal cells to produce new ECM components, helping counteract the natural degradation associated with aging.
- Adhesive Epitopes: RGD (Arginine-Glycine-Aspartic acid) is present in fibronectin and laminin. Fibronectin and laminin are two major glycoproteins in the extracellular matrix (ECM) that provide structural support, regulate cell adhesion, and promote migration. While both facilitate tissue development and repair, fibronectin is primarily

found in connective tissues, whereas laminin is a core component of the basement membrane. They directly regulate cell adhesion, migration, and structural organization.

- Growth Factor Mimetics: Peptides engineered to mimic or bind growth factors, prompting targeted responses such as angiogenesis or specific cell differentiation.
- Cell Signaling: Trigger signal transduction pathways (such as MAP kinase) that control whether cells proliferate, differentiate, or migrate.
- Wound Healing: ECM-derived peptides accelerate tissue repair by modulating inflammation and promoting fibroblast proliferation.
- Anti-Aging & Regeneration: These peptides promote the production of structural proteins while scavenging free radicals to reduce oxidative stress. (4.,5.,6.,7.,8.,9.)

Peptides Performing

Cosmetic peptides act through diverse biological pathways, targeting cellular and molecular mechanisms in the skin. They can be categorized by their principal functions—such as anti-aging, whitening, repairing, moisturizing, and antimicrobial—each operating through specific processes such as enhancing collagen synthesis, inhibiting melanin transfer, repairing the skin barrier, or modulating immune responses. Cosmetic peptides are primarily derived from plants, marine organisms, or animals, or synthesized via biotechnology. Rather than using raw extracts, these sources undergo hydrolysis or fermentation to isolate bioactive peptides. Many are also fully synthesized in a lab to perfectly mimic natural processes. The main sources used to develop these ingredients include:

- Biotechnology & Synthesis: Most modern cosmetic peptides are synthetic. They are manufactured in labs to replicate the exact shape and size of the body's natural molecules, offering higher purity and effectiveness.
- Plants: Peptides are extracted from grains and vegetables such as wheat, rice, soy, and oats. They are highly effective for antioxidant protection and for improving skin elasticity.
- Marine: Derived from algae, microalgae, fish scales, and shellfish byproducts, these are popular for soothing inflammation and boosting hydration.
- Animals & Byproducts: Traditionally, peptides were derived from sources like animal proteins, dairy (whey), and egg yolks to aid in strengthening the skin barrier.
- Venom (Biomimetic): Certain wrinkle-smoothing, muscle-relaxing peptides are modeled after specific snake venoms.

Significant research efforts are driving the development of peptides to address skin aging, creating a strong market for peptide innovations in the cosmeceutical industry. Research shows that bioactive peptides boost fibroblast collagen production, reduce collagen degradation, and enhance extracellular matrix protein expression, helping to preserve the skin's structural integrity and counteract the effects of natural aging. Additionally, these peptides support anti-aging effects by neutralizing free radicals, binding pro-oxidative transition metals, lowering hydroperoxides, and enzymatically removing certain oxidants.

Specialized testing of peptide ingredients in cosmetics enhances understanding of their quality, ensuring product efficacy and safety. Techniques such as the CBQCA or BCA assays enable companies to accurately measure total protein in raw materials. This thorough testing supports consistent quality control and formulation precision. Reliable protein measurement helps maintain batch-to-batch consistency and guarantees that products achieve the desired peptide effects—such as firming, repairing, or anti-aging—without variability that could compromise effectiveness or consumer confidence. Integrating these analytical services into development and quality

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assurance processes allows cosmetic companies to innovate with confidence, knowing their peptide products meet strict quality standards.

The INCI (International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients) list ranks ingredients by concentration, from highest to lowest. An effective peptide should appear in the top third of this list. If it appears near the end, after preservatives, its concentration may be too low to be effective. Formulations containing multiple complementary peptides usually outperform single-peptide formulas due to synergistic effects and enhanced benefits. Avoid using products with "opposing" activity alongside peptides, such as AHAs and BHAs. Peptides require active delivery methods through the skin due to their inherent properties and high-molecular-weight (>500 Da), polar, and hydrophilic molecules. One approach to improving active diffusion is to use physical or chemical permeation enhancers. A simple water-based serum with a hydrophilic peptide is unlikely to penetrate effectively. Encapsulating peptides in phospholipid-based liposomes facilitates skin penetration and boosts topical delivery. Additionally, chemically modifying peptides with lipophilic derivatives can increase encapsulation efficiency.

Physical penetration enhancers apply energy to aid delivery—such as iontophoresis, electroporation, or sonophoresis—thereby slightly disrupting the stratum corneum. This disruption is required for enhanced transport efficiency. Other techniques include microneedling, lasers, radiofrequency, and mesoporation.

In naturally aging or wounded skin, the extracellular matrix (ECM) is continuously degraded by enzymes called matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs). MMP-mediated degradation produces small protein fragments. In synthetic signal peptides, the precise amino acid sequences of these fragments are replicated. When applied topically, they bind to specific cell-surface receptors on dermal fibroblasts. When the cell receptors recognize these "false" breakdown

signals, they trigger an intracellular signaling cascade, causing the cell to respond as if it urgently needs to repair an active injury. This pathway strongly activates transforming growth factor-beta (TGF-beta), a key cytokine that regulates tissue remodeling, wound healing, and matrix production. When TGF-beta is expressed, and fibroblasts are activated, it leads to a significant increase in essential skin matrix proteins. Signal peptides transmit various signals to the skin, depending on their type, tricking it into perceiving an injury. This can trigger fibroblasts to produce collagen, elastin, and glycosaminoglycans (GAGs) by mimicking fragments from extracellular matrix (ECM) breakdown and boosting matrix metalloproteinase (MMP) activity. As a result, this promotes anti-wrinkle effects, skin tightening, scar healing, and further stimulates TGF-beta.

SIGNAL PEPTIDES

- Acetyl Tetrapeptide-2
- Copper peptides (GHK-Cu)
- GEKG
- Heapeptide -14
- Hexapeptide 11
- Lipospondin
- Matrixyl 3000 (Palmitoyl Tripeptide-1 + Palmitoyl Tetrapeptide-7)
- Palmitoyl Dipeptide-5 Diaminobutyroyl Hydroxythreonine
- Palmitoyl Hexapeptide -12
- Palmitoyl Pentapeptide-4 (Matrixyl)
- Palmitoyl Tetrapeptide-7
- Palmitoyl Tripeptide 38 – (Matrixyl Synthe 6)
- Palmitoyl Tripeptide-1 (Pal-GHK)
- Palmitoyl Tripeptide-5 – (Syn-Coll) TGF
- Pentapeptide 6
- PKEK
- SA1-III
- Tetrapeptide-21
- Tripeptide 10-Citrulline

NEUROTRANSMITTER PEPTIDES

These peptides inhibit the release of neurotransmitters involved in muscle contraction, relaxing facial muscles, and softening expression lines. They work by disrupting SNARE complex formation and mimicking the effects of botulinum toxin (Botox), thereby reducing muscle activity. This approach makes them a practical, non-invasive alternative for treating dynamic wrinkles like crow's feet and forehead lines.

- Acetyl Hexapeptide-8 (Argireline)
- Acetyl Octapeptide-3 (SNAP-8)
- AcetylOctapeptide 1/-3
- Acetylpeptide -3
- Dipeptide Diaminobutyroyl Benzylamide Diacetate (Syn-Ake)
- Leuphasyl (Pentapeptide-18)
- Pentapeptide 3
- Tripeptide 3

REACTIVE & SKIN SENSITIVITY PEPTIDES

- Acetyl Tetrapeptide-15
- Neurosensine (Acetyl Dipeptide-1 Cetyl Ester)
- Palmitoyl Oligopeptide / Palmitoyl Tetrapeptide-7:
- Palmitoyl Tetrapeptide-7
- Palmitoyl Tripeptide-8

CARRIER PEPTIDES

Deliver trace elements and enzymes, including superoxide dismutase, to enhance antioxidant defense and tissue repair. Skin regeneration, hair growth, and post-procedure recovery. Copper peptides are vital for tissue healing.

- AHK-Cu-Manganese Tripeptide-1 (Alanine-Histidine-Lysine-Copper)
- Biotinoyl Tripeptide-1
- Bis (Tripeptide-1) Copper Acetate
- Copper Palmitoyl Heptapeptide-14
- Copper Peptide1 - GHK-Cu (copper tripeptide)
- Magnesium Palmitoyl Pentapeptide-4
- Manganese Tripeptide-1

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ENZYME INHIBITING PEPTIDES

Slow the body's natural breakdown of collagen and elastin by blocking enzymes that degrade them, thus maintaining the skin's structural integrity. This includes inhibiting enzymes such as tyrosinase (related to pigmentation) and ACE (which reduces edema). Depending on the peptide, benefits include brightening, de-puffing, and reducing dark circles.

- Dipeptide-2
- Tripeptide-10-Citrulline
- Tetrapeptide-5 (Eyeseryl)
- Trylagen (peptide and MMP combo)
- Rice and Soy Peptides - yeast enzymes (oxido-reductases), soy peptides & rice peptides (hydrolyzed rice bran extract)
- Oligopeptide-68

SYNTHETIC & ALTERNATIVE PEPTIDES

- Antibiotic Alternative - Analog of natural AMP – Acne - Granulysin-derived peptides are bactericidal against Cutibacterium acnes and possess anti-inflammatory properties.
- Wound Healing - Only a handful of AMPs have obtained FDA approval for bacterial skin infections or wounds, including Gramicidin D, Daptomycin, Oritavancin, Telavancin, and Dalbavancin
- Plant Sources: Soy (hydrolyzed soy protein), Oats (Avena sativa), Pea (Pisum Sativm), Rice (hydrolyzed rice protein), Wheat (hydrolyzed wheat protein), Avocado (hydrolyzed avocado protein) Baobab (hydrolyzed Adansonia Digitata Seed Extract, Gota Kola (Centella asiatica), Mung Bean (Vigna Radiata Seed Extract) Potato peptides (hydrolyzed potato protein), Hexapeptide-40 SH Oligo peptide-1 (Nicotiana Benthamiana).

SYNTHETIC MSH ANALOGS

- Pharmacological modifications to tetrapeptides derived from α-MSH have increased their stability and efficacy on melanocyte α-MSH receptors, reducing DNA damage from UV radiation.

- PTPD-12, a synthetic peptide derivative, was found to induce depigmentation via an autophagic pathway when applied topically to human skin explants. Decapeptide-12, a relatively new peptide, has been found to be safer than hydroquinone in reducing melanin content.[10., 11., 12., 13., 14., 15., 16.]

Peptides With More Purpose—Health & Wellness

Therapeutic peptides typically function as hormones, growth factors, neurotransmitters, ion-channel ligands, or anti-infective agents. They bind to cell-surface receptors to initiate intracellular responses, demonstrating high affinity and specificity, much like biologics such as therapeutic proteins and antibodies.

Therapeutic peptides form a distinct class of drugs, consisting of structured amino acid sequences and typically weighing between 500 and 5000 Da. Their discovery began with basic research on natural human hormones such as insulin, oxytocin, vasopressin, and gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH), highlighting their roles in human physiology. Insulin was the first therapeutic peptide synthesized in 1921. Since then, there have been significant advances, resulting in more than 80 peptide drugs approved worldwide. Peptide drug development remains a vibrant area within pharmaceuticals. They are frequently used in medical applications such as metabolic health and weight management (e.g., GLP-1 receptor antagonists), neurotoxic peptides for pain relief, gastrointestinal treatments, vaccines, drug delivery platforms, oncology, infectious disease mimetics, and hormone-releasing antagonists for cancer therapy.

Peptides are increasingly used in wellness, longevity, and sports medicine and are used to boost human growth hormone (HGH), aid tissue repair, reduce fat mass, or improve recovery after exercise. Enthusiasts across the wellness, sports, and recovery sectors actively support peptides that promote healing of soft-tissue injuries, stimulate hormone production to boost athletic performance, and support lean muscle growth. Some synthetic peptides that promote muscle growth, known as growth hormone secretagogues (GHS), may pose safety concerns by reducing insulin sensitivity and increasing blood sugar levels. Additional risks associated with injectable or systemic peptides include "off-label" unregulated sourcing with questionable purity, as peptides sold by non-qualified, unvetted sources may be contaminated, mislabeled, or improperly stored. Incorrect use of these peptides can result in severe injuries, such as infections, abscesses, and scarring. Since peptides are signaling molecules that influence the body's natural functions, using them without supervision can lead to hormone imbalances, significant drops in blood sugar, water retention, and thyroid issues.

Many widely used peptides haven't undergone extensive long-term human testing, making their effects with ongoing or regular use largely uncertain. Products that modify natural immunity should be used with caution, particularly by individuals with autoimmune conditions. As with any medical, nutritional, or health supplement, it is advisable to consult a healthcare professional before use to ensure safety.

The forecasted outlook for peptide science in cosmetics is quite optimistic, fueled by a rapidly growing market driven by rising skin care awareness and an age-diverse demographic. More consumers are choosing peptide products for pro-aging, barrier repair, and overall skin health, with demand climbing as the research and development expand. Consumer interest is evident, with millions of searches for peptides, reflecting their mainstream appeal and the growing interest in longevity and molecular skincare.[17, 18, 19, 20]

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Dr. Erin Madigan-Fleck, NMD, LE, LEI, has over 40 years of experience in the aesthetic and natural health industry. She is a naturopathic medical physician, a licensed master cosmetologist-esthetician and an esthetic instructor. As a global educator, she serves on the Educational Commission for the International Association of Applied Corneotherapy in Germany. She is the owner of DermaEducationTV and her practice, Naturophoria, which she founded in 2000.



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THE RISE OF THE ESTHETICIAN-CEO: A DISCIPLINED ROADMAP FOR GROWTH IN 2027

By Eunice Cofie-Obeng

As we move into 2027, the esthetics industry is entering a defining moment. Technical skill will always matter, but it will no longer be enough. The professionals who thrive in this next era will be distinguished not only by the results they deliver in the treatment room, but by the strategic thinking behind their business.

The perception of the esthetician is evolving. No longer seen solely as service providers, estheticians are stepping into expanded roles as entrepreneurs, educators, skin health advocates, and brand builders. That shift requires more than talent. It requires structure.

When it comes to growing your business in 2027, posting more, discounting more, and hustling harder will not build sustainable growth. Growth will depend on structure, discipline, and clarity as an entrepreneur.

When you adopt a systematic approach to entrepreneurship, business building moves from guesswork to strategy, from reactive to repeatable, and from inconsistent income to measurable profitability.

Here is what that strategy looks like:

1. The Future Belongs to Estheticians Who Specialize

In 2027, generalists will struggle while specialists lead. To specialize, start by defining your local market segments, then identify your most profitable audience and finally build a detailed profile of your ideal client.

The central question becomes: "Who do you serve so well that your work becomes indispensable?" Examples of market segments include skincare for melanin-rich skin, anti-aging skincare, acne bootcamps, oncology-safe skincare, lymphatic sculpting facials and men's grooming. Specialization does not limit opportunity. It strengthens differentiation.

2. Value Must Be Clear, Measurable, and Confidence-Driven

Clients do not purchase services. They invest in outcomes. They are not buying a facial, chemical peel, beard treatment or brow sculpt. They are investing in confidence, visible improvement, professional guidance, a sense of control over their skin health and trust in a knowledgeable expert.

Estheticians who succeed in 2027 will clearly articulate the transformation they provide. Their messaging will center on results, not procedures.

There is a difference between saying, "I offer customized facials," and saying, "I help clients achieve clear, calm, even-toned skin within 90 days using a personalized, evidence-based treatment plan." The second statement communicates expertise, structure and measurable impact. That is what builds long-term loyalty.

3. Pricing Must Be Strategic, Not Emotional

Pricing is one of the clearest indicators of professional maturity. Too often, estheticians set prices based on comfort, comparison, or fear of losing clients. In 2027, successful estheticians will shift toward pricing models rooted in data and profitability.

Strategic pricing requires:

- Calculating cost-to-serve to ensure sustainable margins
- Understanding lifetime client value to support retention-based pricing
- Quantifying transformation outcomes to reflect expertise

Start with a simple exercise: for your signature treatment, add up product cost per service, your labor for the full appointment time, and your overhead per treatment-room hour (rent, utilities, insurance, and supplies divided by the hours you actually treat). Many estheticians discover their "comfortable" price barely covers cost-to-serve which means every fully booked week is quietly unprofitable.

A $175 treatment that resolves a five-year skin concern offers far more value than a $70 service that produces temporary results. Pricing is not personal. It reflects positioning, skill and measurable benefit. Professionals who price with clarity attract clients who value expertise.

4. Consistency and Client Retention Will Outperform Viral Marketing

2027 is not the year of chasing virality and visibility. It is the year of building loyalty systems. Visibility without retention is unstable and profitability will favor estheticians who build loyalty systems rather than chase trends.

The most profitable estheticians will not have the biggest followings. They will have the strongest rebooking strategy, post-treatment follow-ups, personalized care plans, retail recommendations and client experience standards.

Make these systems concrete. Rebook every client before they leave the treatment room not by asking "Would you like to rebook?" but by prescribing the next step: "Based on your skin's response today, I want to see you in four weeks. Does the same day and time work?" Then follow up within 48 hours with a personalized message checking on their skin and reinforcing their home-care plan. These two habits alone will outperform any viral post.

The key metric will shift from "How many new clients did I get this week?" to "How many clients returned and referred others?"

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5. The Esthetician-CEO Will Become the Industry's Most Influential Role

So, what exactly is an Esthetician-CEO? She is a licensed professional who treats the treatment room as one revenue channel among several—not the entire business. She knows her numbers: cost-to-serve, retention rate, and lifetime client value. She builds systems that run without her constant presence, and she makes decisions from data rather than emotion. The Esthetician-CEO does not work more hours than her peers. She works from a plan.

The future belongs to those who expand strategically, not reactively. Once your foundation is solid, expansion opportunities include product partnerships, retail and membership models, hiring and training systems, and community-based skincare leadership.

Expansion should be sequenced, not rushed: build your business systems first, stabilize your practice and then scale.

In 2027, the estheticians who rise will be those who embrace clarity about who they serve, confidence in the value they deliver, strategic pricing rooted in profitability and consistent client experience standards. These are the disciplines that create longevity in this industry.

The invitation of this new era is simple: stop thinking of yourself as a booked-solid service provider and start operating as the CEO of a skin health business. The treatment room is where your expertise lives. The business behind it is where your legacy is built.



Eunice Cofie-Obeng is the Founder, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Chemist and Licensed Esthetician of Nuekie, an innovative skin care company for people of color. Eunice holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry/Molecular Biology from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and a Master of Science degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences with a specialization in Cosmetic Science from the University of Cincinnati. She has garnered many awards including the Cosmetic Executive Women Innovator Award in Product Development and R&D. The entrepreneur has been featured on Essence.com and in Forbes, Allure, Madam Noire, Florida Trend, Tallahassee Woman, Afiya, and Ghana Television.



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THE NEW LANGUAGE OF LUXURY SKINCARE: INGREDIENTS, EXPERIENCE AND INTENTION

By Gillian Bigelson

Luxury skincare has evolved far beyond ornate packaging, prestige pricing, and a beautiful jar on the vanity. Today's most discerning consumers are asking deeper questions. What is inside the formula? How does it feel on the skin? What is intentionally left out? Does the ritual create a sense of pleasure, confidence and care? And perhaps most importantly, does the product deliver an experience that feels both effective and emotionally satisfying?

In modern luxury skincare, performance and pleasure are no longer separate categories. The most compelling formulas are those that combine meaningful ingredients with an elevated sensorial experience—texture, fragrance, finish and the way the product makes a client feel in her body. This is especially important in professional spa, wellness and aesthetic environments, where skincare is not simply transactional. It is part of a ritual of restoration.

Ingredient Integrity as the Foundation of Luxury

Today's luxury client is highly educated. She may not know every International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredient (INCI) name, but she is more aware than ever of ingredient quality, sourcing and function. She wants formulas that feel indulgent, but she also wants to understand why they are worth the investment.

Luxury skincare begins with ingredients that serve a purpose. This may include antioxidant-rich botanicals, barrier-supportive lipids, peptides, vitamins, ceramides, fermented ingredients, marine actives or plant oils rich in essential fatty acids. The goal is not to create the longest ingredient list possible, but to create a balanced formula where each ingredient contributes to skin health, visible radiance, texture, hydration, resilience, or overall skin vitality.

In the professional space, this distinction matters. Clients are increasingly looking for products that support the appearance and feel of healthy skin over time, not just provide temporary softness. A beautifully formulated cream, serum or balm should do more than sit on the surface. It should support the skin barrier, improve the feel of dryness or roughness, enhance luminosity and make the skin look and feel better with consistent use.

This is where ingredient storytelling becomes powerful. A formula with red raspberry seed oil, for example, offers a more meaningful story than "moisturizing oil." A peptide complex sounds more advanced when connected to the appearance of firmness, smoothness, or rejuvenation. Antioxidants such as astaxanthin, CoQ10, vitamin C derivatives, botanical extracts and nutrient-dense oils can be positioned around environmental defense, radiance, and graceful aging. Luxury clients want beauty, but they also want intelligence.

Texture: The Silent Salesperson

Texture is one of the most important, and often underestimated, parts of a luxury skincare product. A product can have exceptional ingredients, but if the texture is sticky, thin, greasy, chalky, or unpleasant, the client will not reach for it consistently. A luxurious texture creates desire. It turns application into a ritual.

Texture communicates quality immediately. A rich cream that melts into the skin, a silky serum that glides without pilling, a balm that cushions without heaviness—these experiences create an emotional response before the client has even evaluated long-term results. In a treatment room or retail setting, texture often sells the product before the ingredient list is discussed.

For spa professionals and aestheticians, this matters because clients are more likely to use products they enjoy. Compliance is not only driven by education; it is driven by pleasure. If a product feels beautiful, smells elegant, absorbs gracefully, and leaves the skin looking luminous, the client is much more likely to incorporate it into a daily ritual.

Finish is part of this equation. Some clients want a matte finish, while others want a healthy glow. In luxury skincare, the ideal finish often depends on the product category and intended use. A body cream, for example, may benefit from leaving the skin soft, supple, and subtly radiant without feeling greasy. A face serum should layer well under other products. A post-treatment moisturizer should comfort the skin without overwhelming it. The finish should align with the lifestyle of the client.

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Fragrance and the Emotional Dimension of Skincare

Fragrance can be polarizing, but in luxury skincare, it remains one of the most powerful components of the sensorial experience. Scent is deeply tied to memory, emotion and identity. A well-composed fragrance can make a product feel comforting, sensual, elegant, fresh, nostalgic or indulgent.

The modern luxury consumer, however, is more selective. She may still want a beautiful scent, but she does not want it at the expense of perceived safety, comfort or skin compatibility. This is why fragrance transparency has become increasingly important. Brands are being asked not only what a product smells like, but what type of fragrance is used and what is excluded.

For some brands, this may mean essential oils. For others, it may mean carefully selected phthalate-free fragrance. Some products may be fragrance-free entirely, especially for sensitive or post-procedure skin. The key is intentionality. Fragrance should never be an afterthought. It should be selected with the same care as the active ingredients, emulsifiers, preservatives and packaging.

A luxurious scent should complement the formula and enhance the ritual. It should invite the client to pause. In a world of rushed routines and constant stress, skincare can become a small but meaningful daily moment of reconnection.

What Is Left Out Matters

Luxury is also defined by restraint. Increasingly, consumers want to know what a product does not contain. The “free-from” conversation has evolved from a marketing trend into a core part of brand trust.

Many clients are looking to avoid ingredients such as phthalates, certain endocrine-disrupting compounds, Polyethylene Glycol (PEG), synthetic silicones, parabens, harsh surfactants, drying alcohols, artificial dyes, or other ingredients they perceive as unnecessary or misaligned with their wellness values. Not every “free-from” claim is equally meaningful, and professionals should be cautious about fear-based marketing. However, thoughtful exclusion can be an important part of luxury positioning when it reflects a genuine formulation philosophy.

The most sophisticated brands do not simply remove ingredients to follow trends. They formulate with purpose. They ask: Can we create a beautiful texture without this ingredient? Can we achieve slip, cushion, preservation, stability or fragrance in a way that aligns with our values? Can we make the product feel indulgent without compromising the standards of a wellness-oriented consumer?

This approach requires more effort. It may be more expensive. It may take longer to formulate, but that is part of what makes it luxury.

Luxury Is How the Product Makes You Feel

Perhaps the most overlooked aspect of luxury skincare is emotion. A truly luxurious product should make the client feel cared for. It should make her feel polished, radiant, sensual, confident and connected to herself.

This emotional dimension is especially relevant in body care, a category that has historically been treated as less sophisticated than facial skincare. Consumers are beginning to expect more from body products. They want face-grade ingredients, elegant textures and formulas that support the appearance of smoother, more resilient, more luminous skin. The body care category is moving beyond basic hydration into a more elevated conversation around skin health, aging, confidence and ritual.

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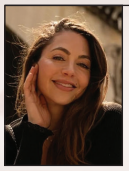
For spas, med spas and luxury retailers, this creates an opportunity. Clients already invest in advanced facial treatments and high-performance home care, but many are underserved when it comes to the skin on the body. A luxury body product can become more than an add-on. It can become part of a complete skin wellness philosophy.

The Future of Luxury Skincare

The future of luxury skincare will belong to brands that understand the intersection of science, safety, sensuality and storytelling. It will not be enough for a product to be beautiful. It must be thoughtfully formulated. It must feel exquisite. It must align with the values of the modern wellness consumer. And, it must create a ritual that clients genuinely look forward to repeating.

Luxury is no longer only about what a product costs. It is about the quality of the ingredients, the sophistication of the texture, the elegance of the fragrance, the intelligence of the formulation, the integrity of what is left out and the emotional experience it creates.

The best luxury skincare does more than moisturize. It transforms a daily routine into a moment of beauty, care, and connection.



Gillian Bigelson is the founder of Bonjour Delilah, an award-winning luxury skincare brand born from her passion for beauty, longevity, and the art of aging beautifully. With more than two decades of experience working alongside physicians in integrative, regenerative, and aesthetic medicine, Gillian has built her career at the intersection of science, wellness, and innovation. She brings that expertise to Bonjour Delilah, pairing advanced skincare actives with decadent textures and an elevated sensorial experience. Inspired by her love of European beauty and her dog Delilah, Gillian is also deeply committed to giving back, with each purchase supporting animal rescue.



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JANZU: WHY AQUATIC BODYWORK IS MAKING WAVES IN MODERN SPA WELLNESS

By Nancy Trent, founder and president of Trent & Company

As consumers continue to seek wellness experiences that go beyond traditional massage and seek substantive healing, spas are increasingly exploring modalities that address the mind-body connection in new ways. One technique attracting growing interest is Janzu, an aquatic bodywork practice developed in Mexico that combines movement, breath, flotation, meditation, and sensory immersion to create a deeply restorative experience.

Unlike many wellness trends that emerge and disappear within a few seasons, Janzu aligns with several long-term shifts shaping the spa industry. Today's guests are increasingly seeking nervous system regulation, emotional well-being, immersive sensory experiences, and treatments that foster presence rather than performance. For spa professionals looking to diversify their wellness offerings, understanding the principles behind Janzu may provide insight into why aquatic therapies are gaining renewed attention.

Practitioners often describe Janzu as much more than a massage. It is a fusion of somatic therapies that blends bodywork, meditation, movement, and sensory exploration. Through subtle, graceful movements in warm water, practitioners guide clients through an experience designed to engage the physical, mental, emotional, and energetic aspects of well-being.

According to Lilian Coronado, body therapist and Janzu facilitator, the practice creates a unique opportunity for participants to reconnect with themselves in ways that are difficult to achieve on land.

"Being in the water sharing Janzu has been one of the most beautiful gifts I have ever received," says Lilian. "It has taught me how to listen and how to let go. When I release the need to control the experience, the water itself becomes the guide."

Originally developed in Mexico in 1998, Janzu incorporates flowing movements, breath awareness, and moments of gentle underwater immersion, all while the participant remains fully supported by the practitioner. Lilian describes Janzu as an aquatic experience that blends bodywork, meditation, and sensory exploration. Through graceful movements, practitioners guide the entire being—physical, mental, emotional, and energetic—into a state of deep immersion, helping participants discover a profound sense of inner calm and connection.

Water itself plays a significant role in the experience. Long recognized as a therapeutic medium, water reduces the effects of gravity, relieves pressure on joints, and allows the body to move with minimal muscular effort. Janzu practitioners believe the aquatic environment offers additional benefits because it temporarily alters sensory perception.

"When you are in the water, two very important senses are temporarily suspended: hearing and sight," explains Lilian. "By keeping your eyes closed in the water, you can release your sense of space, and even your sense of your own body."

This temporary reduction of external sensory input creates an experience that differs significantly from traditional bodywork therapies. As participants become immersed in the rhythm of the water, many report a deep sense of calm and presence.

"There comes a moment where your breathing becomes so completely natural that you can simply be present," says Lilian. "Being in the water, receiving and letting go, allows you to meet your own vulnerability."

For wellness professionals, this aspect of sensory immersion is particularly relevant at a time when consumers are increasingly overwhelmed by digital stimulation, information overload, and chronic stress. The ability to disconnect from external distractions and reconnect with one's body is becoming an increasingly valuable wellness outcome.

While formal research on Janzu remains limited, there are now more than 380 Janzu practitioners worldwide, and participants commonly report deep muscle relaxation, increased flexibility, relief from physical discomfort, improved sleep quality, reduced stress, enhanced body awareness, emotional release, and a profound sense of peace and serenity. These outcomes align closely with broader wellness trends focused on recovery, resilience, and restorative self-care.

Lilian believes one of the most important benefits is helping people reconnect with the present moment and everything that accompanies it.

"Being aware of the control we hold in our body and mind is a beautiful step toward surrender, gratitude, and liberation," she says.

One reason aquatic therapies continue to attract attention is their ability to create a safe environment for emotional processing and relaxation. Lilian recalls a particularly memorable session when a client suddenly became tense while floating in the water.

"I paused the movement and she began to cry," says Lilian. "Afterward, she shared that she had finally released grief she had been carrying for years. The breath, the water, the sea, and the presence invited her to let go of something that was emotional, mental, and physical."

While spa professionals should avoid making therapeutic claims outside their scope of practice, experiences such as these help explain why guests increasingly seek wellness modalities that support emotional well-being alongside physical relaxation.

Janzu can be practiced in pools, rivers, lagoons, hot springs, and therapeutic aquatic environments. However, many practitioners believe the ocean creates the most transformative setting. Lilian first learned Janzu in the warm waters of Bacalar, Mexico's famed Lagoon of Seven Colors, but today considers the Sea of Cortez one of her favorite environments for practicing the modality.

"The gentle ocean swell is perfect," says Lilian. "The saltwater beautifully supports and holds the body, and the summer water temperature offers the perfect moment to share Janzu."

The ocean contributes several unique elements that can enhance the experience. Seawater naturally contains magnesium and trace minerals that have long been associated with relaxation and recovery. Saltwater also provides greater buoyancy than fresh water, allowing for deeper stretches, effortless movement, and a sensation of weightlessness that many participants find profoundly calming.

Many wellness experts refer to the calming influence of water as the "Blue Mind" effect, describing the way

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oceans, lakes, and other bodies of water can help quiet the mind and regulate the nervous system. The rhythm of the waves, combined with the feeling of floating, often creates a meditative state that is difficult to replicate elsewhere. Moving water also generates negative ions, which some studies suggest may contribute to improved mood and overall feelings of well-being.

Across cultures, saltwater has long been associated with cleansing, renewal, and transformation. Whether viewed through a wellness, spiritual, or symbolic lens, many participants describe leaving a Janzu session feeling lighter, refreshed, and emotionally renewed. “In the sea, Janzu becomes more than a therapy,” says Lilian. “It’s a return to the source.”

As consumers continue seeking immersive wellness experiences, Janzu offers spas and wellness resorts an opportunity to differentiate themselves through highly personalized programming. It reflects a larger shift within the wellness industry away from simply treating symptoms and toward creating experiences that support the whole person.

As wellness continues to evolve beyond beauty and fitness alone, therapies that encourage presence, sensory restoration, and nervous system regulation are likely to become increasingly valuable additions to spa menus. When asked what she hopes people carry with them long after they leave the water, Lilian’s answer captures the essence of Janzu.

“Presence,” says Lilian. “What we allow ourselves to experience in the water is exactly what we can live day by day through true presence. Listening, letting go, and living in gratitude.”

For spas seeking innovative ways to help guests slow down, reconnect, and experience deeper restoration, Janzu may represent one of the most compelling aquatic wellness modalities emerging today. As Lilian often tells her clients, “Be like water: transform, let go, and allow the movement to cleanse and nourish your soul.”

Nancy Trent is a writer, speaker, lifelong wellness activist, trend watcher, and founder and president of wellness PR firm Trent & Company. A former journalist for New York Magazine, Trent has written seven books on healthy lifestyles and travels the world speaking at conferences and trade shows. She is a recognized expert in PR, with more than 30 years of experience creating highly successful campaigns.



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WHEN THE SKIN IS TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING: LOOKING BEYOND THE SURFACE TO BETTER UNDERSTAND OUR CLIENTS

By Angel M. Flener, LE/CLT

A client walks into your treatment room frustrated. She's been using professional skincare and diligently following every recommendation, yet her skin seems to have changed overnight. The breakouts along her jawline weren't there six months ago, her skin suddenly feels both dry and congested, and she is more reactive than ever before. Then she says something you've likely heard a dozen times: "I don't understand. I'm doing everything right." As estheticians, most of us have cared for this exact client. In fact, you may have seen several just this week.

Our first instinct is often to re-evaluate products, ingredients, or treatment protocols—asking ourselves if we should change his/her cleanser, step up exfoliation, or introduce a new active serum. Over the years, however, I've found myself asking a fundamental question: What if the skin isn't the problem? What if it's trying to tell us something?

That simple shift in perspective completely transforms consultations, treatment plans, and client education. It serves as a reminder that while we work on the body's largest organ, the skin never functions in isolation—it is constantly responding to what's happening internally.

Hormones, Meno and Mano-Pause, stress, sleep, nutrition, medications, inflammation and overall health all heavily influence skin behavior. While diagnosing internal conditions is strictly outside our scope of practice, recognizing that these factors are influencing the skin absolutely is not. The skin leaves clues. Our job is to gather those clues, ask thoughtful questions, and recognize when a situation calls for a modified treatment plan or a referral to a medical professional.

Becoming a Skin Detective

One of the most rewarding aspects of esthetics is that no two clients are identical. Two people can present with acne for entirely different reasons: one might have congestion from improper home care, while another is navigating perimenopause. Someone else's sudden breakouts may stem from acute stress, a medication change, or metabolic shifts they haven't yet connected to their skin.

While the temptation is to treat what we see, the real opportunity lies in understanding why we're seeing it.

I often encourage estheticians to think like detectives—not to deliver medical diagnoses, but to gather meaningful information. Every consultation provides pieces of a broader puzzle. The location of a breakout, the speed of post-treatment healing, a sudden increase in sensitivity, or subtle changes in pigmentation are all clues. When we approach the skin with curiosity rather than assumptions, we naturally become better, more effective practitioners.

The Consultation Is Where the Treatment Begins

I've always believed that individual Consultation is the single most important phase of any service. Long before we cleanse the skin or select targeted products, we are building a comprehensive picture of our client's overall health and lifestyle.

Often, the most valuable question we can ask isn't "What products are you using?" but rather, "What has changed?"

- Has your stress level recently spiked?
- Have you started or changed medication?
- Have you started Hormone or Peptide therapies?
- Are you sleeping differently/have your cycles shifted?
- Have you noticed changes in your energy or overall metabolic health?

Clients rarely realize life changes connect to their skin until we bridge a gap for them. More often than not, asking these questions brings a sudden moment of clarity, and the lightbulbs start to go off alongside the bells and whistles:"Oh... I think I started menopause six months ago," or "I've been getting HRT treatments." Those light bulb moments reinforce that skin care isn't just about managing surface products, it's about understanding the human being sitting in front of us.

Hormones: The Silent Conversation Beneath the Skin

Hormones carry on a constant dialogue with the skin, influencing oil production, hydration, collagen synthesis, pigmentation, wound healing, and inflammatory responses. When those internal chemical messages change, the skin changes right along with them, which is why we see such dramatic shifts during puberty, pregnancy, postpartum, perimenopause, and menopause. This is now more seen in both men and women, too!

No amount of aggressive exfoliation, trendy ingredient or social media banter can reverse a systemic hormonal shift. What we can do is adjust our treatment goals, protect the skin barrier, support natural function and offer clear education. Sometimes, reassurance and validation are just as valuable as the clinical treatment itself.

Looking Beyond Hormones

Hormones are only one piece of a complex picture; the skin is continually influenced by the whole person.

- Chronic stress elevates cortisol, driving up systemic inflammation and compromising barrier integrity.
- Poor sleep hinders critical overnight repair and recovery processes.
- Nutritional gaps impair wound healing and collagen synthesis.
- Medical conditions like thyroid disorders, diabetes, autoimmune diseases, and PCOS alter how skin responds to topical treatments.

While none of these conditions are ours to diagnose, recognizing their presence allows us to make safer, smarter care decisions. Knowing when a client would benefit from consulting a physician isn't stepping outside our scope—it is practicing at the highest standard within it.

Treating the Skin That's in Front of You

Experience has taught me one crucial lesson: Not every client needs a stronger peel; sometimes they

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just need a new routine that isn't going to destroy the barrier! We work in an industry that heavily celebrates dramatic correction, but correction isn't always the first priority. If the skin is inflamed, reactive, dehydrated, or compromised, our primary role is to calm, restore, and strengthen before even considering aggressive resurfacing. When clients feel that we understand why their skin is reacting, they feel heard, safe, and truly cared for—building a foundation of deep professional trust.

Collaboration Strengthens the Profession

In my world, one of the most exciting shifts in modern esthetics is engaging in collaborative care. The best client outcomes happen when estheticians, dermatologists, primary care providers, endocrinologists, and dietitians/nutritionists can work in harmony. Our goal isn't to replace medical professionals, but to recognize when interdisciplinary support serves the client best. My famous saying to my clients is "When in Doubt, Refer Out." Referring to when something seems off isn't a failure—it's a sign that you are paying attention to your clients' stated needs and actually care about their desired outcome.

Listening to What the Skin Is Saying

Great estheticians don't simply look at skin, they listen to it. Our job isn't to have every single answer, but to ask better, deeper questions. When we trade reactivity for curiosity, view consultations as clue-gathering opportunities, and educate with both confidence and compassion, we elevate our entire profession. Healthy skin is rarely just what we apply to the surface—it reflects the remarkable system within. I believe that the greatest gift we can give our clients is simply helping them understand what their skin has been trying to say all along.



Angel M. Flener, LE is the founder of The Skin Coach, LLC, a results-driven skincare practice committed to helping clients achieve healthy, radiant skin with ease. With over two decades of experience and a deep passion for skin health, Angel combines evidence-based treatments with personalized, compassionate care. Specializing in customized skincare and age management, she is an international award-winning aesthetician who actively champions continuing education within the industry.

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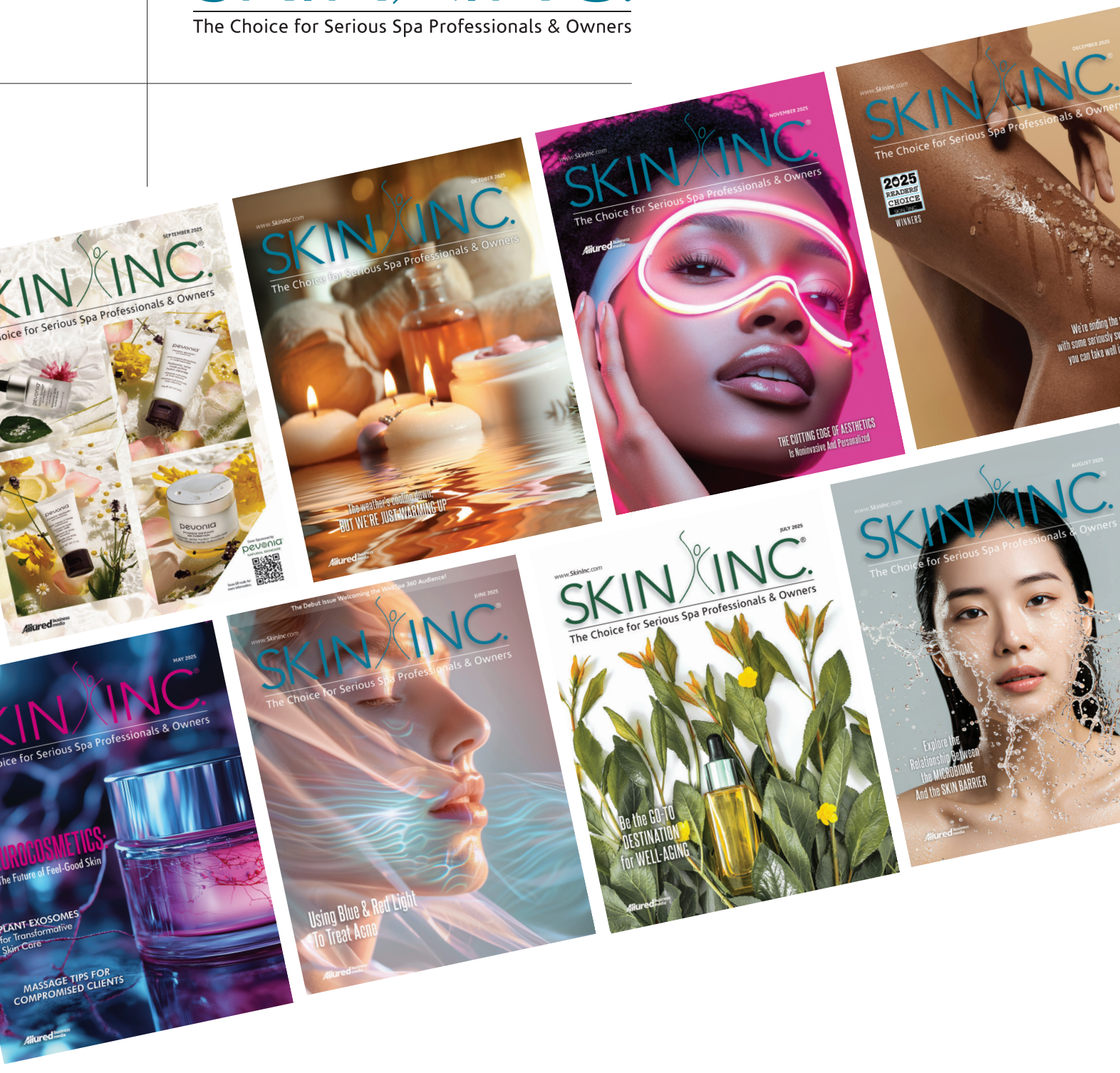

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