

les nouvelles *esthétiques* & spa AMERICAN EDITION

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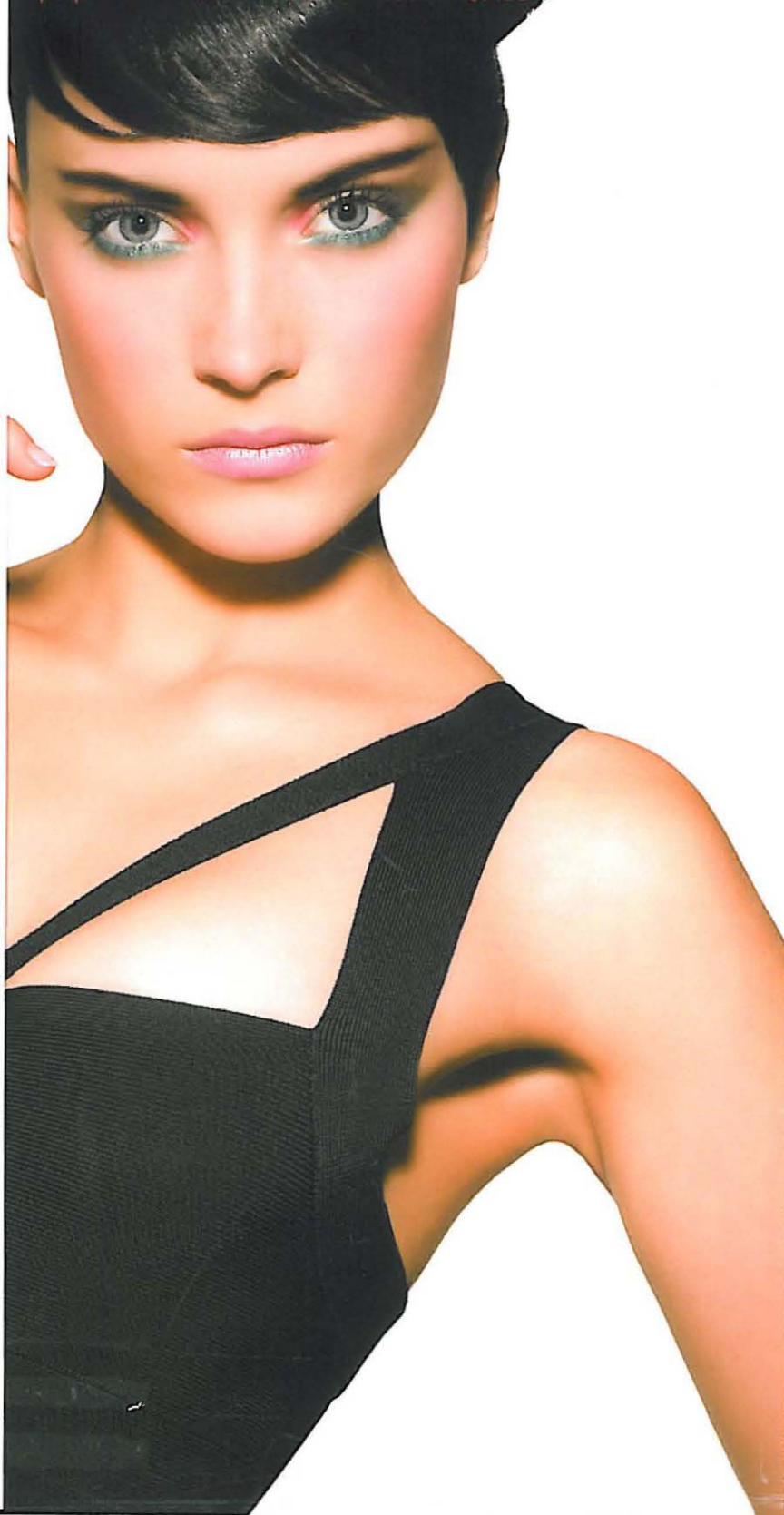
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for spa professionals November 2009 \$7.50



medical | spa services help manage osteoarthritis

by Rob and Carol Trow

A NEW DISCOVERY HAS BEEN made in the field of medicine. Osteoarthritis (OA) and its accompanying symptoms can be improved through a varied protocol of nonmedical treatments offered by most spas and skin care practices. Osteoarthritis is, unfortunately, the most common joint disease, affecting a significant number of current and potential skin care and spa clients—particularly those over 50—and virtually all individuals over age 75.

The following article focuses on how you can help your clients, as well as how you can attract a new audience for your practice while providing a meaningful service by assisting in the alleviation of symptoms for OA sufferers.

Medical study involves spas

OA affects the joints in our body and can cause some or all of the following symptoms, many of which can be severely debilitating: pain, decreased range of movement in joints, deformity and weakening of bones. The latter factor makes breaks and fractures more likely. OA is a progressive condition that only worsens over time.

While several new prescription drugs have been introduced to the market and a plethora of studies on the importance of exercise, taking vitamins and minerals (e.g. calcium) and other remedies are being conducted, there have been no studies examining how spa professionals may be able to assist clients and patients suffering from this condition. Until now.

The Annals of Rheumatic Diseases, a distinguished medical journal, did something unusual in the September 2009 issue. They featured a report on a large multicenter study designed to determine if commonly available spa services could be helpful in the management of osteoarthritis. To date, it is rare that any prestigious medical publication studies the medical benefits of spa offerings, one reason being the discipline required of a controlled study that could withstand medical scrutiny as opposed to anecdotal results.

Spa therapies improve OA symptoms

The study group was comprised of 382 participants separated into two groups. One group of 187 patients received the usual medical treatment including home exercises. The second group of 195 patients had the same treatments as the control group but with the additional spa services of massages, showers, applications of mud and pool sessions for 18 days. The findings were significant.

According to the researchers, the group receiving the spa treatments profited materially from the added services. Further, the group that underwent the spa treatments were still experiencing benefits from the spa services even six months after the sessions took place.

The documented conclusion is quite obvious and affirmed by the study's scientific team: doctors should prescribe spa therapy to go along with the traditional medical and home exercise pro-



ocols for treating and managing osteoarthritis to design the most beneficial program for patients.

These research findings should be used to spread the word to physicians and therapists in your region as well as to actively inform your current and potential clients on how to help moderate and improve the symptoms of osteoarthritis. It is important to be careful not to describe your services as a medical treatment, but rather as an adjunct therapy to physician prescribed medical protocols. ■

Rob and Carol Trow are internationally known experts, speakers and writers in the skin care field.