

Preparing for the Best and Protecting Yourself From the Worst

choosing a topnotch medical director for your medi-spa

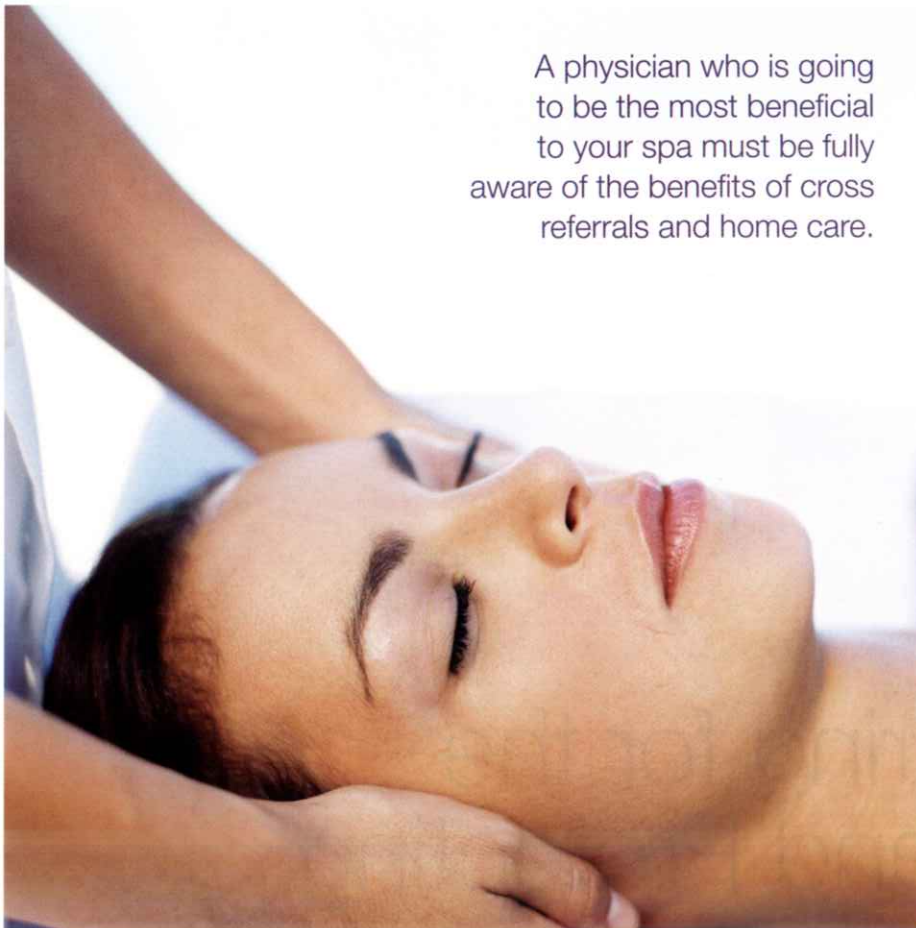
THIS ARTICLE FOCUSES ON MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM A DAY SPA TO A medical spa, including finalizing the search for a medical director. It considers that looking for such a candidate can be like preparing for a marriage and planning for a divorce. There are a series of questions you must ask yourself and your potential medical director, and you must put some serious paperwork in place before you seal the deal.

Before signing a business agreement, both parties must know what type of relationship they are consummating. Many experts say a business collaboration is like a marriage. There are legalities involved, financial ties, even personality issues. And, since a large percentage of the marriages in the U.S. end in divorce, you need to know this relationship can run the gamut, from a wonderful to an ongoing daily nightmare, just like a marriage can become.

To prevent such problems, it is vital to fully understand the role each party is to play by having many discussions before entering into a legal agreement, and that a breakup agreement is defined in the agreement—a prenuptial, if you will, one negotiated and final. Then, if the collaboration does not work out, a friendship may be maintained and potentials for referrals can remain intact—just not in the same facility. ➔

BY ROB AND CAROL TROW

A physician who is going to be the most beneficial to your spa must be fully aware of the benefits of cross referrals and home care.



What does your liability insurance cover? What does the physician's? What is covered by both parties' malpractice insurance? Who is responsible for certifying all policies and procedures? Who is responsible for making sure everyone is properly trained and certified to perform each service? What are the ethical guidelines of local and state medical and regulatory organizations, professional and governmental? Who has authority to hire and fire staff, especially those who are working with medical producers?

The critical questions

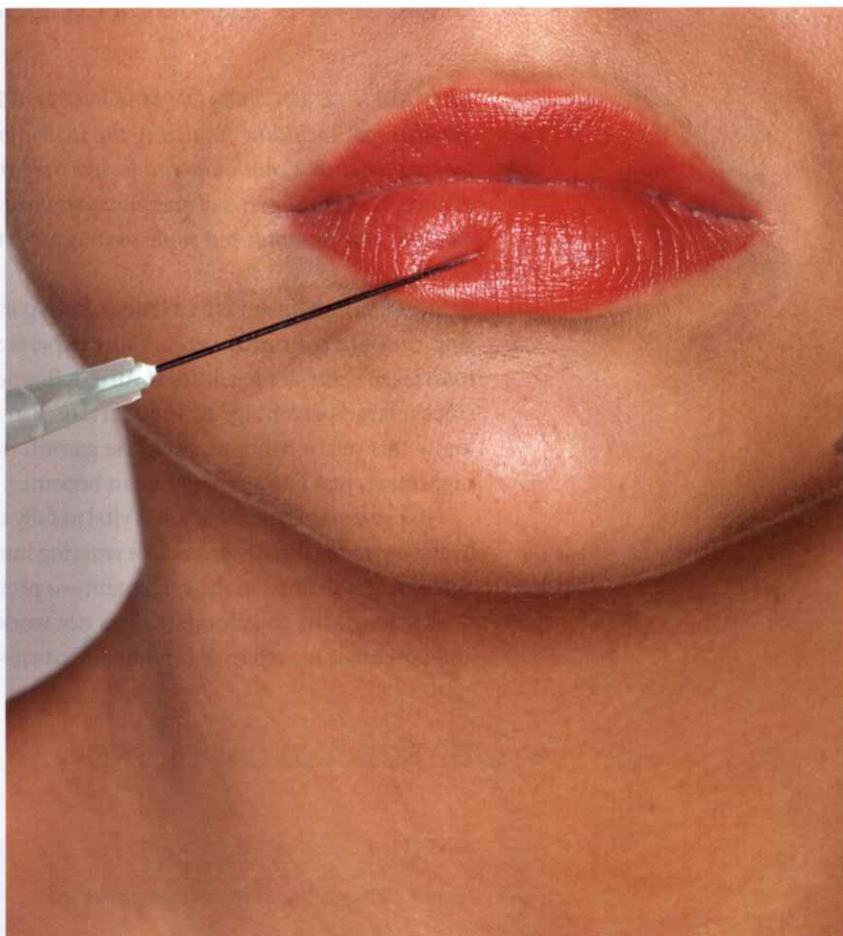
Whatever the legal agreement or form of collaboration, you, as the spa owner, must know the day-to-day will be different in your spa. Adding a medical director and medical treatments bring another whole dimension to your business. Some owners love it, while others hate it. Whatever, medical collaboration is a consideration for your spa and can be a great benefit, if you chose the right medical director.

Here we cover the critical issues of what questions you need to ask yourself and any potential physician for whom a potential collaboration is a possibility.

the stats

NEARLY 11.7 million cosmetic surgical and nonsurgical procedures were performed in the United States in 2007, according to statistics released by the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. The Aesthetic Society, which has been collecting multi-specialty procedural statistics since 1997, says the overall number of cosmetic procedures has increased 457 percent since the collection of the statistics first began. The most frequently performed procedure was Botox® injections and the most popular surgical procedure was liposuction.

"Our statistics confirm that aesthetic plastic surgery is not defined by race or gender," says Aesthetic Society president Foad Nahai, M.D. "The number of surgical and nonsurgical procedures performed on men increased 17 percent since last year, and 22 percent of the esthetic procedures were performed on traditional racial and ethnic minorities."



Your search is going well and you have heard from an interested physician. The talks begin. For this collaboration to be successful, certain questions must be asked and answered appropriately, as in any marriage, in order for the relationship to work at its best for everyone. The questions may include the amount of previous esthetic training, how many days can be provided at the spa, how much room will be needed, who will own the equipment, how many staff member will be needed—and then one question will lead to more. But, I suggest the questions below be asked before going into the above listed questions.

Ask the prospective medical director, Do you understand the benefits of cross referrals to the spa, to you and to your medical esthetic patients? Esthetics is new to the medical field and an entirely new practice arena to physicians who are accustomed to treating pathologies. This can cause problems in a collaborative spa if the physician is not fully informed in the benefits of pre and post esthetic treatments to their care and of the practice of cross referrals. Nor are many convinced of the benefits of home care to their patients. Conversely, those who are, or become

so, are enthusiastic about both the benefits and results of pre and post esthetic care and of selling home care products. A physician who is going to be the most beneficial to your spa must be fully aware of the benefits of cross referrals and home care for improving treatments and for enhancing income.

Also ask, Will you cross refer to the spa estheticians in your pre and post care? Some physicians know the benefits of cross referrals but just don't do it. Know this: the on-site medical director must actively refer to the spa estheticians for pre and post medical esthetic care in order for the business relationship to meet its financial potential. No matter the form of collaboration, the circle of care must be in place, forming a cross referral system that will sponsor a flow of clients/patients between the rooms/spas, benefiting all.

Running behind schedule

What is the potential medical director's philosophy concerning running late for your next client? Physicians are usually not concerned with running late for their medical patients as they wish

continues

defining the difference

YOUR MEDICAL DIRECTOR will need to be comfortable in his or her post. Nevertheless, there will be a difference between what your day spa looks like now and what your medical spa will be like. Here are the major differences.

- Medical-level services are on the menu and are offered in the medical section of the spa, usually including laser care, Botox® and injectables, which reduce the evidence of wrinkles.
- A medical director for the new spa is required, according to the state law.
- Medical level service products should include a higher concentration of active ingredients, allowing enhanced results in the peels and treatments.
- More complex treatments than previously allowed can now be performed in the facility.
- Medical level home care products should contain higher concentrations of active ingredients and are not available on the Internet.

Additionally, the changes in the physical facility will require the input of the medical director, so it is very important the search for him or her is completed early in the decision-making stages of the medi-spa development.

Top surgical and nonsurgical cosmetic procedures among men and women in 2007

Surgical	# procedures
Liposuction	456,828
Breast augmentation	399,440
Eyelid surgery	240,763
Abdominoplasty	185,335
Female breast reduction	153,087
Nonsurgical	# procedures
Botox	2,775,176
Hyaluronic acid (Hylaform, Juvederm™, Restylane®)	1,448,716
Laser hair removal	1,412,657
Microdermabrasion	829,658
Laser skin resurfacing	647,707



While discussing the spa with a candidate, listen to that small voice from within that answers those important questions, How easy is this person going to be to work with at the spa? and, Is this going to work?

to complete each patient's care—it is a philosophy that runs deep in medical training. However, you must discover what your potential medical director's philosophy is for esthetic patients, as lateness is a serious problem in the esthetics industry. It is best that you inform the potential director that lateness does not work in esthetics treatment care and will cause immense problems if they cannot change their philosophy to on-time care for esthetic patients. These patients want their treatments on time and do not appreciate waiting. If not, it causes problems for the spa staff.

Ask him or her, Will you be in the spa when scheduled? The doctor is scheduled to be in the spa at a certain time and is scheduled with patients. If a call comes to the front desk a half hour after he or she is scheduled to be there, and he or she is not, there is a problem. This situation has proven to be a serious challenge for collaborative spas, not so much so if the medical director is full time, with no other prac-

tice. Discuss the matter with the potential director, stating that medical esthetic patients do not respond well to lateness, nor will your spa personnel. A protocol for early notice should be put in place. It is important that the medical director buy into the importance of being on time for the relationship to work.

Team player, essential

Are the potential medical director's interpersonal skills optimal for working within a team? Many physicians work well within a team but others do not, as it is not a priority in their training. Not collaborating with others can become a problem in spas, as they are team-driven environments. Discuss the topic. Now! One owner of a very successful spa said two physicians approached him and worked within his spa in a virtual environment—one was great, the other was a nightmare. Nine months later, in spite of the million dollars that came in, he used his cease clause on the collaboration: the high profits were not worth the hassle and upset in his spa.

In considering a medical director, as with any other pivotal persons in the spa, his or her skills as well as reputation in the community are important, but their overall success also rotates dramatically around the physician's possession of skills for working within a team. For that reason, while discussing the spa with a candidate, listen to that small voice from within that answers those important questions, How easy is this person going to be to work with at the spa? and, Is this going to work? When you hear a comforting and confident yes from within, then you have the person that will work well towards both your successes. Now you can ask the organizational questions mentioned at the beginning of the article.

If you have a nagging doubt, run, do not walk away from this physician and continue on your search, for the good of your spa. You'll be glad you did. ■

Rob and Carol Trow, his wife, own *DermaConcepts USA*, the eastern U.S. (excluding metro NYC) distributors for *Environ® Skin Care*. Rob's background includes two decades in higher education as a faculty member, administrator and business consultant. He has been in the skin care field for more than ten years. Prior to her involvement with *Environ Skin Care*, Carol served as an RN, director of marketing for *Professional Service Business Development* and operated her own consulting firm focusing on practice development. Rob is an authority in the business of skin care and has authored articles for professional publications. He speaks frequently on current and emerging topics of interest to medical spas, estheticians and physicians.

