

THE MARRIAGE OF AESTHETICS AND WELLNESS POST COVID-19

How to incorporate wellness services into an aesthetics practice



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THINK ABOUT IT; WE WERE GOING about our daily lives doing normal things like working out, trying to eat healthy food, avoid smoking, sun exposure, over-indulging in alcohol and other life-shortening habits, and along came the Coronavirus.

Post-pandemic, most of us have gained a heightened sense of our health, lifestyle, and longevity. 2020 has undoubtedly shed new light on what it means to be well. It has also revealed the many fissures in healthcare systems around the world and shed new light on the underlying conditions that make some of us more at risk for getting sick and having the most severe symptoms.

Wellness redefined

The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) that is widely considered the premier organization in the category, defines wellness as: 'the active pursuit of activities, choices, and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health.'¹

It should be noted that GWI considers wellness to be an individual 'active pursuit' that is associated with our personal intentions, choices, and actions we take to get to an optimal state of health and wellbeing. It also refers to holistic health as extending beyond physical health and having many components that should ideally work in harmony. But they make a distinction between wellness and health, wellbeing, and happiness. Rather, wellness is considered an active process of taking steps that lead to the desired outcome of optimal holistic health and

wellbeing. In short, we are responsible for our own state of wellness or lack thereof.

Rise of mental health and anxiety issues

According to an article in the BMJ Opinion, the mental health impact of the pandemic is likely to last much longer than the physical health impact.² The authors note a higher incidence of isolation, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety over financial concerns and relationship challenges. Burnout and sleeplessness are also a common problem.

Stress can have a profound effect on all of us. According to the Mayo Clinic, 'If you have stress symptoms, taking steps to manage your stress can have many health benefits... Aim to find active ways to manage your stress. Inactive ways to manage stress—such as watching television, surfing the internet or playing video games—may seem relaxing, but they may increase your stress over the long term.'⁴ Their recommendations for stress management strategies include regular physical activity, practising relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, yoga, tai chi or massage, and making time for distractions like reading a

book or listening to music.

As such, many people are looking for outlets that offer a nurturing experience to calm their nerves and make them feel good about themselves again.

What patients want now

There is a robust interest for health and wellness treatments and services that presents as an opportunity for aesthetic practices. Wellness programmes can include enhanced services that may be presented as ideal adjuncts for medical aesthetics.

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Most of your patients probably live or work within a 25-mile radius, but virtual consults have undoubtedly allowed practitioners to expand their reach geographically. Therefore, if you offer something unique, that patients cannot get anywhere else, your practice may be positioned as a destination in the market.

Before you start to re-invent your practice, find out what services and additions your current patients might appreciate. Sending out a wellness survey may be a worthwhile initiative. They may enjoy an occasional socially distanced yoga class or meditation session, or relaxing signature facials and therapeutic massages may be more in line with their goals. Personal interaction is an integral component of the wellness industry that relies on some level of physical touching. Thus, in a post-pandemic atmosphere, it is necessary to carefully consider how to offer the services your clients want while keeping them and your staff safe.

Key learnings from spas

Consider what the word 'spa' conjures up. A sense of calm, relaxation, and pampering comes to mind.

High-end spas can have many valuable lessons to offer about how to elevate the patient experience in an aesthetics practice. The relaxation aspect of spas is what draws people in. It is a chance to unwind and block out the sensory overload of our 24/7 modern lifestyle. This resonates with an even wider range of people now than before the pandemic, such as busy home-schooling moms, overscheduled execs, frequent flyers, as well as stressed out students seeking some quality 'me time'. The stressors of 2020 have taken their toll on everyone.

The most successful spas are often envisioned on a philosophy that serves as the foundation for building a brand. Your concept should not only be unique, inviting and marketable, it must be operationally efficient as well. The most profitable spa businesses are those whose concepts are the combined result of due diligence, creativity, a solid focus on day-to-day operations and a clear understanding of the best ways to reach their target clients.

In an aesthetic practice, short of having a separate facility or a dedicated wing in the office, a medspa focus may consist of a few treatment rooms and well-trained aestheticians and therapists who can create the right environment and deliver what their clients need. Consider adding skin and spa services and programmes that are synergistic with the vision, values, and culture of



your practice. Ensure that your existing facility effectively supports the patient experience you are striving for, while also provides the essentials needed to run an efficient operation. Poor planning and design, inadequate patient privacy and flow, and lack of storage can all negatively impact your bottom line. Your facility's design should visually communicate your concept and offer a sensory experience to the client.

At Anushka Medical Spa in West Palm Beach, FL, Bonnie K. Marting, DNP, APRN, Director of Medical Aesthetics, personally trains all of the injectors, body contouring professionals, and medical aestheticians. They feature a wide range of skin rejuvenation therapies plus SilkPeel®, Cutera® Laser Genesis®, SculpSure®, Venus Legacy™, Nova Threads, and more. 'We wanted to create a one-stop destination for all our clients' personal aesthetic needs, and frequently add new treatments to keep our menu fresh and exciting. Our point of difference in the market is featuring state-of-the-art treatments and scientifically validated products in a luxe environment.'

Multidimensional Aspects of Wellness

- **Physical:** Nourishing a healthy body through exercise, nutrition, sleep, etc.
- **Mental:** Engaging the world with our intellectual minds.
- **Emotional:** Being aware of, accepting, and expressing our feelings, and understanding the feelings of others.
- **Spiritual:** Searching for meaning and higher purpose.
- **Social:** Connecting and engaging with others in meaningful ways.
- **Environmental:** Fostering positive interrelationships between the environment, health and human actions, choices, and wellbeing.

Wellness services in demand

Choose services and products that are consistent with your brand and address the needs of your patients. Don't just add a service because it happens to be trending. For example, Ayurveda, reflexology, nutritional counselling, therapeutic massage, and IV therapy are very popular in certain markets.

'In L.A. we have a ton of clinics offering IV therapy and wellness services either freestanding or as part of a medical spa or cosmetic office. We don't provide IV vitamin therapy because I don't think it works, and I want to feel confident that everything we offer for patients is something that adds value. I believe in focusing on our core strengths, so I would rather do more injections and lasers. That being said, we have brought on an aesthetician who has been a good referral source for our core procedures, and provides real solutions for real issues, like acne and ageing skin for our patients,' says Alexander Rivkin, MD of Westside Aesthetics, in Los Angeles, CA.

One of the cornerstones of the spa experience is not adopting a one-size fits all approach to clients. Bespoke solutions rate high with patients who are willing to pay a premium for the exclusivity of having a treatment programme created just for them. Consider developing your own signature booster treatments that patients cannot get anywhere else, such as ampules and serums incorporated into facial treatments with home care ▷

Simple Ways to Pivot to Wellness

- Let the natural light in, and brighten up the facility with soft, modern lighting and sheer window coverings
- Keep fresh flowers or succulents at the front desk to maintain a natural environment
- Include popular wellness topics in your blog posts and social media content to educate your patients on key trends of interest
- Neutralize the waiting room by moving framed diplomas and old media clips out in favour of original artwork or beautiful photographs that create a calming mood
- Add your wellness menu to your website to let patients know what you can offer them

▷ products built into a global fee. Develop signature combination treatments that will serve as the foundation of your brand. These may include customised programmes with injectables and laser and light-based procedures, as well as branded layered services combined with home care products. Look for skincare ranges that offer back bar sizes for specialty products to combine them with in-office peels and facials.

According to dermatologist Vivian Bucay in San Antonio, TX who has two offices, 'We carry products designed to give our patients options and proven solutions for their skin concerns from inflammation, to stubborn acne, signs of ageing and loss of elasticity. We also offer supplements including Nutrafol®, Heliocare® and SunISDIN®. My approach is that healthy skin is not only the foundation of any treatment but a goal in and of itself and every product in our practice is carefully selected by me.'



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experience in your practice is personalised, pampering as well as therapeutic.

many practices were on lockdown. Implement an SMS programme to confirm appointments and patient reminders.

These technology hot points are time savers not only for patients, but for staff as well. Reaching patients on their mobile devices is where they are likely to be most accessible and responsive. It can take some of the time-consuming payment and scheduling details out of the total experience so patients can sit back and relax when they come in.

Be mindful of the total patient experience that begins with their first contact with your brand, which may be online, by phone, or walking or driving past your business. Success will also depend on having the right team on board who share your vision, are 'people persons' by nature, and can readily adapt to the high service culture that spas understand so well. Ultimately, how your team interacts with each other as well as with patients can ensure that the

Intersection of technology and wellbeing

The powerful combination of health and technology has changed the way consumers approach their wellbeing. From devices that track our every move to online booking engines, digital connectivity is improving our access to wellness and spa services. It is something that they not only expect but now demand.

Patients want to have an efficient experience in your practice, as they have with other service businesses they frequent. For example, accepting credit and debit cards for payments in standard today, but an added step is to use an app so patients can make payments and receive their receipts electronically. Offer online bookings, cancellations, rescheduling, plus product purchasing through a thumb-friendly website, Facebook and Instagram. Curbside service and dropshipping products have also flourished during COVID, especially when

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The emerging Wellness trend

According to a Mintel report on health management trends for 2020, 'Adults are most motivated to set health and wellness goals to improve their health, feel happier, look better and take control of their wellbeing. As adults are adjusting to life and priority shifts beyond lockdowns, consumers are focused on staying in control of emotional, mental and physical health...Simple ways to incorporate wellness from the comfort of the home or nearby outdoor spaces have taken over as essential practices to maintain connections, release newfound stress and recuperate some semblance of normalcy.'

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