

Anti-Aging Treatments

LED, Microcurrent and Infrared Therapy

by Phyllis Hanlon

Regardless of time of year, there are forces at work that can wreck havoc on the body, particularly the face. Too much sun, not enough sleep, smoking, poor nutritional habits and environmental factors can take a physical toll, aging skin prematurely. Of course, aging itself causes changes to skin, including wrinkles, brown spots and sagging.

Massage therapists can address clients' skin by using advanced tools in their practices.

The baby boom generation continues to shape the focus of health care in the U.S. In 2010, the last year a U.S. census was completed, baby boomers ranged in age from 46 to 64 years old. As this generation continues to age, its members—especially females—are increasingly



The infrared blanket from Sudatonic USA

turning to complementary and natural therapies to address skin issues related to aging. Employment of skin care specialists is projected to grow 40 percent from 2012 to 2022, much faster than the average for all occupations, according to a report from the U.S. Census Bureau, which noted, "The desire among women and a growing number of men to reduce the effects of aging will result in rapid employment growth."

Although many skin care services are not within the scope of practice of massage therapists, certain new technologies may be added to a massage session. This means massage therapists are poised to become providers of therapies that target this aging and appearance-conscious demographic, thereby increasing their practice income while providing treatments that are easy on their own bodies.

Based in science

Massage therapist Sheri Brown remembers when she received a light emitting diode (LED) facial from a student in the esthetics department at her massage school. The facial provided such dramatic results, she vowed to include this service when she opened her massage practice.

Brown kept her promise when she opened Relinquish Holistic Spa in Atlanta, Georgia, including LED and infrared therapies on her menu of services. "Clients come in for a body wrap to contour and tone," Brown says. "We suggest LED as an add-on."

When NASA began experimenting with LED as a way to grow human and plant cells, the technology proved effective at helping the body heal itself. "The LEDs that produced near-infrared light used in NASA's research were shown to stimulate the basic energy processes by activating color sensitive chemicals within the cells," according to the "NASA Light Emitting Diode Medical Applications" research study.

"DNA synthesis in fibroblasts and muscle cells had been quintupled," the study noted. "The light absorbed



DPL Therapy System from LED Technologies



The Biotic Wave, from Beauty & Wellness Technologies Inc.



Fit Bodywrap

by the cells stimulated the metabolism in muscle and bone as well as skin and subcutaneous tissue."

Soon after the news of NASA's discovery hit, several manufacturers began adapting LED technology as an anti-aging and beauty treatment. The FDA has approved some LED products for home and session use, while others' approvals are pending.

One FDA-approved product is DPL Therapy System from LED Technologies (www.ledtechnologies.com), a company based in Elizabeth, Colorado. "The LED fills out and tightens the skin and provides a gentle warmth," says Ron Ferguson, the company's co-owner, president and founder. Ferguson explains LED can reach between 1 1/2 and 2 inches into tissue to stimulate and create fibroblasts, which serve as the center for collagen and elastin production. Therefore, LED technology applied to the skin increases collagen production.

LED systems come in a variety of models, and can be used to target different areas of the body, he adds. "The LED loosens the muscles and joints" says Ferguson. "You can use LED a couple of times a day, approximately 17 minutes per session. Over time you will see a difference—but everyone's skin is different, so the response will differ."

Creams work well with LED systems, but therapists should avoid using heat-producing products. Specially formulated creams with peptides help drive light deeper into the body and work to minimize wrinkles.

The financial investment for LED systems varies, from \$199 for a three-panel flexible system ideal for the neck to \$349 for a version that offers maximum coverage. Handheld models cost \$159 and can be used on virtually

When massage is added to infrared treatments, the cumulative effect can be significant.

any area of the body. Therapists who carry the latter version for resale can get distributor pricing.

Supple and smooth

Infrared treatments work in much the same way as LED to rejuvenate skin, making it more supple, soft, smooth and toned, according to Sofia Higgins, founder and creator of an infrared blanket and creams, whose company, Sudatonic USA (www.sudatonicusa.com) is based in Henderson, Nevada. "Infrared also reduces dimpling and stretch marks," she says. During a typical 90-minute session, the heat from an infrared blanket, in combination with creams blended with essential oils, stimulates the lymphatic system and penetrates 1 to 2 inches into tissue. "When you sweat, the creams emulsify," Higgins notes. Softened tissue makes the therapist's job much easier when it comes time to start the massage portion of the session.

Infrared treatments can be received frequently; in fact, some clients like to do five treatments over five consecutive days, then take a three-day break, according

to Higgins. The client can then taper treatments off until she achieves her goal and begins maintenance.

Infrared heat is similar to the sun's heat, explains Sandy Weisman, COO of Fit Bodywrap in Poway, California (www.fitbodywrap.com). "It's a natural heat, almost as if you are outside and the sun pops out. It feels like it just got 10 degrees warmer. The air around you doesn't get warm, but you do," he says.

Infrared heat metabolizes fats and toxins in the body, according to Weisman. "Research indicates the sweat from infrared treatments contains as much as 15 percent fats and toxins, compared to exercise-induced sweat, which contains about three-to-five percent fats and toxins," he says.

Moreover, infrared increases blood flow, heart rate and base metabolism. When fats and toxins are removed from the body, skin looks tighter and wrinkles and fine lines are diminished. Infrared delivered via a blanket provides the same heat as an infrared sauna, but is more comfortable, particularly for those who are claustrophobic. Some systems are client-controlled,

leaving the therapist time to do massage on another client at the same time, thus generating more revenue.

When massage is added to infrared treatments, the cumulative effect can be significant, Weisman says. "Blood flow can be increased, from five-to-seven quarts a minute to 13 quarts a minute."

Infrared blankets typically range between \$1,000 and \$3,600, but, in some cases, practitioners can arrange payment plans with the manufacturer, and some companies offer in-house financing.

When it comes to pricing infrared treatments, geography and overhead matter. "Usually, a therapist looks at how much she charges for a 90-minute massage and bases the fee on that," Higgins says. "You really want clients to buy a package, which you would then discount."

Ride the wave

Another technology, microcurrent, can regenerate and replicate cells rapidly. Developed by a physicist, the technology stimulates production of collagen, elastin and adenosine triphosphate (ATP), an important enzyme in cell metabolism, according to Anna Marie Colavito, CEO and founder of Beauty & Wellness Technologies Inc. (www.bioticwave.com) in Mill Valley, California.

Microcurrent penetrates deeply into skin. "The treatment can address any skin condition, including brown spots, wrinkles and skin tone," Colavito says. "It can lift the cheekbone muscle and the nasal labial fold, basically restructuring the face and stimulating collagen production."

Microcurrent treatments can be done safely every day, says Colavito, who recommends having the first two treatments within one to five days of each other. "You lock in the energy when they are closer together," she explains. "After that, the client can do it once a week or as many times as she wants. I usually sell them in packages of three to five sessions."

This therapy fights aging on the face, and it can also address sagging arms and breasts. Colavito says as women hit their 50s, many experience loose skin under their arms. Microcurrent stimulates elastin and collagen production, firming the skin. "You can use it for breast lifts and on any other muscle," she adds. The Biotic Wave system can also lighten brown spots on hands and reverse sun damage.

A massage therapist can begin a session with 20 minutes of microcurrent, followed by massage. "[Microcurrent] upgrades the massage, as it [loosens] the fascia and reduces inflammation," Colavito says.

The Biotic Wave is a combination medical and cosmetic device and costs \$5,995.

Marketing strategies

Manufacturers typically offer marketing materials with the purchase of their systems, such as postcards to announce the service and posters for in-office display. Sudatonic allows massage therapists who buy their products access to their webmaster and graphic designer, for example, to create a three-minute promotional DVD.

Some massage therapists have joined Groupon, offering discounts on services to draw clientele to the business; however, Higgins warns you should proceed cautiously with any type of wide-ranging discount program. "A massage therapist can do a Groupon, but might not make money at first. But if the client likes the service, she may decide to stay and pay for more sessions," she says. "But you might want to limit the number of Groupons you sell."

Packages are the way to go when recouping your initial investment, according to Colavito. LED, infrared and microcurrent treatments demonstrate optimal results after several sessions. By offering clients a multi-session package at a reduced rate, you will guarantee return visits.

While she uses such traditional marketing tools as brochures and flyers, massage therapist Shari Brown uses technology for marketing as well. When clients book online, they automatically receive suggestions to add on infrared and LED.

Brown plans to market her LED and infrared therapies to local plastic surgeons and doctors who perform esthetic surgeries as an adjunct therapy to sculpt the body, she says, adding that women who have had liposuction and tummy tucks utilize the service to reduce scar tissue.

Increase revenue with less stress

As complementary options continue to take a bigger chunk of health care dollars, all-natural, chemical-free treatments that require no prescription, botulism or plastic surgery could be the answer for massage clients looking to reduce signs of aging. Any massage therapist should check state and local regulations before offering skin-related therapies; however, when treatments such as LED, infrared and microcurrent are within the scope of practice of massage, they can help therapists increase their revenue streams with less stress on their own bodies.

Phyllis Hanlon has written nonfiction articles and book reviews as well as human-interest stories, profiles and award-winning essays. Her specialty areas include health and medicine, religion, education and business. She regularly delights in the joys of massage. She has written many articles for *MASSAGE Magazine*, including "Hands-Free Massage: Save Your Body and Your Career" (February) and "Hawaiian Healing: The Art of Lomilomi" (March). 

Exclusive Online Special!

MASSAGE Magazine
Only **\$1.25** Per Issue

> CLICK HERE <

For Expedited Service

FREE if You Act Now!

Order now and get
a music CD for **free!**

CD contains 74 minutes of soothing
massage music on 16 tracks



Call **888-883-3801**



Order online: www.massagemag.com