

# beginner's basics

Susan Preston, president of Professional Program Insurance Brokerage, offers some useful suggestions for medical spa newbies.

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It seems that more and more doctors, nurses, and spa owners are interested in setting up medical spas these days. Yet, as with any up-and-coming industry, not everyone will achieve success. Competition will weed out the marginal players in this game, and the well-run businesses will be the ones to survive. So, how do you set up your business to be one of the survivors?

In traditional medicine, clients receive products and services that are required to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Most of the cost of the service or medicine is often paid for by health insurance. Because of this, doctors, nurses, and other health professionals are not typically in the business of “selling” services. Medical spa services are elective and not covered by health insurance, so professionals in the business must become salespeople for the services and products being offered. Many entering this industry don’t fully understand this distinction from traditional medicine.

## OFFERING OPTIONS

Providing clients with a diverse menu of services to choose from is crucial. Laser services are considered the bread-and-butter income of a medical spa, and laser and IPL technology continues to advance so you can offer your clients the best, most effective services. But offering laser therapy alone is not enough. As a medical spa owner, you need to offer a variety of options to your clients. Women especially are pressed for time these days, and they want to get treatments done without having to seek them out or go to multiple locations. By adding a variety of services to your menu, you make it easier for clients to take part in additional treatments while there.

In addition to laser therapy, Botox and dermal fillers are also popular offerings. While these services require a doctor, nurse, or other licensed medical professional in most states,

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they can be very profitable when combined with laser options. To get the maximum benefit from these services, market a combination of treatments as a “package plan.” Many medical spas offer clients finance options, which are a good way to fund those getting several procedures. When setting this system up in your medical spa, be sure to understand all the disclosure laws required to the client getting this financing.

It is also important not to omit traditional spa services from your menu. It is easier and less costly to find licensed estheticians versus nurses to do facial services and treatments like microdermabrasion. Also, when it comes to massage therapy, keep in mind that some therapists work as independent contractors, allowing your medical spa to offer the service without having to make a full-time commitment to a therapist.

### RETAIL REMEDIES

Another good source of income for medical spas is retail sales. Spas have traditionally offered a range of homecare products for sale, and so should your medical spa. When it comes to choosing which retail lines to carry, keep in mind that by offering your own private label products, you take on extra liability, and thus it is more costly to purchase insurance. It is much easier to carry another company’s products. Companies are constantly creating new, more effective products for the medical spa industry. Attend conventions and trade shows on a regular basis to see what’s out there, but be sure to understand the liability

issues and possible complications before buying new, untested products.

### MARKETING STRATEGIES

In most of the country, the general public is still not aware of all the options available to them at medical spas. Marketing is a key component of any successful business. Offering referral credits and giving multiple service discounts are good ways to get repeat business. Invest in a good brochure and other collateral to hand out to your clients so that they can show their friends what services your medical spa offers.

Unlike traditional medicine, people will not beat a path to your door without some incentive or cosmetic need. So instead of sitting around waiting for business to come to you, you need to take the initiative. This is an exciting industry, and clients need to understand the benefits available to them. The medical spa that can show them that is the one likely to survive and thrive, even in this economy.—*Susan Preston*

Susan Preston is the owner and president of Professional Program Insurance Brokerage and Face and Body Professionals, both located in Novato, CA. She has provided insurance and supplies to the permanent cosmetic and beauty industries for more than 16 years, and her articles on beauty and medical issues have been published in national publications. For more information about Professional Program Insurance Brokerage, call (415) 475-4300 or visit [www.medispa-ins.com](http://www.medispa-ins.com).

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