

Worth knowing - the cosmetician as a consultant

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Specifically in cases of problem skin the cosmetician is predestined to offer comprehensive consultation on skin care and skin treatment after the skin is analyzed. Prerequisite here is detailed information on the products.

Today there is a variety of products available for every type of skin and every possible skin problem. The more products are in the market, the more difficulties the consumer has to choose the appropriate skin care product. More than ever, a competent cosmetic consultation is essential.

What does the cosmetician need to know to offer a comprehensive consultation? A central issue is the composition of the products, and in this field, the dosage of the ingredients as well as the physical properties of the different substances is important. A cream designed for the night care e.g. has a higher fat content than a day care product (usually a light O/W emulsion).

Products and their effect

For the cosmetic practice, comprehensive information on physical properties is very important in order to know the effects and foresee the reactions of the different skin types. W/O creams e.g. lead to an intense covering of the skin which causes an increased water deposit in the surface layers of the skin, a fact which explains the "anti-wrinkle effect" on minor wrinkles. The transport of the added active agents into the skin is intensified but on the other hand the formation of skin-own barrier substances is slowed down.

Emulsifier free products which are based on membrane substances are less greasing but support the endogenous regeneration of the skin. Changing from one product type to another will involve adaptation phases which may vary according to the type of skin and which have to be considered. The cosmetician should inform the clients on this issue to avoid unnecessary complaints.

Before applying the products it should generally be considered whether a short or a long-term effect is desired.

Unfortunately, the INCI (the chemical specification of the ingredients) is difficult to decode for the untrained reader. Even so, the reader should take the trouble of studying the code from time to time to memorize the recurring

terms as it facilitates the product selection in cases where a new client explains that she cannot tolerate certain substances.

In cases of intolerance of a product also the dosage may play the triggering role. Glycerine e.g. which also naturally exists in the skin, has a pleasantly moisturizing effect when applied, however, can also have dehydrating effects when applied in high dosage in those rare cases where it is not tolerated by the skin. The INCI only allows a rough estimate of the concentration as the ingredients are listed according to their dosage in decreasing order. Therefore it is important, to precisely observe the effects of the products and to contact the manufacturer in case that there are any problems.

The exact dosage

The dosage is also very important for products with a pH that deviates from the neutral point. Fruit or AHA acids e.g. are highly acidic; products used for the removal of cornifications may be alkaline. Even if the client would like to notice the success as quickly as possible one has to be extremely careful especially if the products are new. The general motto should be: "the less sometimes the better".

There are interesting alternatives for sensitive skin. Still frequently unknown is the fact that appropriate liposome dispersions can achieve a long-term regeneration of the skin within a period of only three weeks.

A further aspect is the shelf life of the products and their storage in the institute. To take vitamin creams as an example: Vitamin A even in combination with vitamin C has a very limited shelf life which is shown by the date imprinted.

There has to be an appropriate stockkeeping regarding the shelf life and the temperature. The refrigerator for the perishable products should be preset between 5 to 10°C; storing the products in the freezing compartment is detrimental for most of the products as the creams break due to the formation of ice crystals.

Products without a shelf life imprint generally keep longer than 30 months and can be stored at room temperature.

Regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the products, the additional information as to competitive brands, which are not sold in the institute but offered with similar advertising messages, is very helpful, especially if these products are sold at a lower price.

Convincing products

An important factor is customer satisfaction. The product has to keep what it promises to achieve. An unbiased consultation based on profound product information is a far better prerequisite than just repeating advertising slogans.

Part of comprehensive product information also is the knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate product combinations. Sometimes preparations of different product types and even of different manufacturers are applied in combination or succession. Studying the product information on the packages helps to avoid problems. It is not very useful e.g. to apply liposome concentrates together with products containing preservatives as liposomes are known to facilitate the penetration of preservatives into the skin. Attention has to be paid to clients with sensitive skin. The combination of different creams around the eye may also cause problems especially if one of the products contains spreading components.

Before the treatment of a new client it is important to ask which product had been used before. Sometimes, the combinations the client applied before already explain the current skin problems. In those extreme cases, it is important to gently restore the normal skin condition with a selection of only few but well-tried products.

Clients with problem skin

Clients with problem skin should use products which are largely free of unnecessary additives. As the self-regeneration of problem skin only is developed at a low level, products with a higher percentage of Vaseline, ceresin and mineral oils should be avoided. Beyond it, if the skin is cracked, products which contain a high dosage of water soluble substances like urea may cause a light but harmless stinging. The effect is similar to sprinkling salt on an open sore. And last but not least, the cosmetician should sufficiently take care of her own skin protection to be able to carry out her occupation for a long time.

The occupation of a cosmetician involves a lot of responsibility and requires lots of experience and information on the products. To be successful in the long term, the cosmetician has to acquire extensive information in the fields of chemistry, physics and medicine and continuously pursue further vocational training.

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