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Laser Hair Removal
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8 Ways Laser Hair Removal Is Redefining Its Niche

By Tracy L. Drumm

Frivolous purchases and lavish lifestyles have seemingly become passé in this post-recession world. The pendulum shift and new economic climate has left many practitioners seeing a decline in the previously steadfast growth of their aesthetic practices.

A common thread for the offices that have remained resilient to financial woes is offering enough treatments to satisfy patients' needs. By diversifying your toolbox of treatment options, you are creating a loyal patient base with strong retention rates. The American Society of Plastic Surgery reports nearly half of all aesthetic patients receive multiple treatments in the same year, meaning your Botox patient is likely getting laser hair removal or facial fillers as well.

One tool being dusted off and boosting profits for hundreds of practices is laser hair removal. Although laser hair removal has had a place in the industry since the early '90s, recent technological advancements and tremendous innovation from leading laser companies have helped reawaken this market. Due to the following eight advancements, laser hair removal devices have become a reliable revenue-generating tool for practices across the nation.

1. Technological revolution

One such device getting buzz for changing the business of hair removal is the LightSheer Duet from Lumenis. According to the company, this machine allows treatments to be performed up to 75% faster than past generations; for example, a service that previously took an hour is now taking only 15–20

ABSTRACT:

The growing demand for laser hair removal services has this aesthetic treatment finding a spot in many practices. With the correct equipment, right support and proper positioning, laser hair removal treatments can become a lucrative option for any medical business, but they require the due diligence of finding the device and systems that work best for you.

minutes. The Duet also has removed headaches associated with laser hair removal by utilizing a vacuum headpiece and lower fluence levels, resulting in a more comfortable treatment for the patient and eliminating the need for topical anesthetic.

Other devices making waves in the market are CoolGlide by Cutera, which offers a patented Powerflex technology to allow independent control of fluence, pulse duration and repetition rates to tailor treatment parameters. Also, as with both devices previously mentioned, the GentleLase 755 nm alexandrite laser from Candela treats skin types I–VI and offers the versatility of treating pigmented and vascular lesions, and is U.S. Food and Drug Administration-cleared to treat wrinkles.

2. Innovative marketing programs

Due to competitive demands, it's no longer just a device that laser manufacturers are selling. The leaders in this niche have realized physicians are more likely to be successful with their laser purchases if armed with the proper tools to help market their services. Choosing a company that views your purchase as a partnership rather than simply a sale will increase your success and profitability.

Included with a purchase from Candela, for example, you have access to the Practice 360° marketing program that offers practice-building tools, staff training and product promotions. Cutera offers a VIP program with downloadable brochures, high-resolution before-and-after treatment images and even patient glamour shots. Yet another option comes from Lumenis through a turnkey marketing package that includes tools customized to a practice's brand.

3. Not luxury, but a way of life

As the tide turns in the country's spending habits, the key to promoting aesthetic treatments is no longer about touting luxury. Rather, many practices are

finding great success in repositioning laser hair removal as a way to enhance their patient's quality of life. The treatment is shifting from being viewed as a pampering service or a want into a need.

Medical aesthetic practices and device companies are helping to promote these treatments as a quality-of-life procedure that simplifies the patient's daily to-do list. Instead of being a self-indulgent aesthetic treatment, laser hair removal treatments are seeing growth by showing patients that physicians can give them the precious gift of time, shaving minutes off daily personal care regimens.

4. Patient retention

When patients come to your office once or twice, it is an experience. When they commit to a package and visit your office six times, they are forming a habit. Laser hair removal treatments increase retention rates and help turn new patients into loyal patrons. By coming to you for repeat visits, they become familiar with your practice, staff and treatment options. Selling packages is an effective way to ensure patients' first visits don't become a one-hit wonder or allow them to be lured away by coupons in the Sunday paper.

5. Delegation

A large factor contributing to the adoption of the newest laser hair removal technology is that the treatment can be delegated to an appropriately trained and licensed staff member. In most states, the department of health or of professional regulations allows a nurse, licensed practitioner or physician's assistant to perform the treatment under the direct supervision of the physician. However, be sure to check with your state to ensure you are complying with all laws and regulations.

Allowing members of your staff to start generating additional revenue streams so they don't rely solely on the physician empowers them. However, you must make sure the employees you designate to provide the treatments are thoroughly trained and offer quality treatments as their results, good or bad, will be a direct reflection of your practice.

6. Profitability plan

Before implementing a new treatment into your practice, it is best to determine your potential return on investment. Quantify the number of appointments necessary to cover the costs associated with a laser purchase, and set this as a goal. Using the provided profitability charts at right as a sample, you can see how simple it is to forecast potential revenue from laser hair removal treatments.

Promote these treatments as a quality-of-life procedure that simplifies the patient's daily to-do list.

Additionally, the forecasted numbers show the importance of selling packages to patients. Bundling treatment prices helps the practice and is a wise investment for patients, as it typically takes six treatments for optimal results. A main selling point for many of the newer technologies is that by investing in a machine that offers decreased treatment times, you are increasing your profit margins.

	Industry Average	Your Practice
Fee per procedure	\$331	(Your price)
Number of treatments per patient	6	6
Income per patient	\$1,986	(Your income per patient)

	Year One	Year Two
New patients each month	Up to 10	Up to 20
New patients each year	Up to 120	Up to 240
Potential annual income	Up to \$238,320	Up to \$476,640

Equipment	Average Time Spent	Average Income	Average Income Per Hour
New technology	20 minutes	\$331	\$993
Traditional technology	60 minutes	\$331	\$331

Figures based on American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery data

7. High satisfaction, with the right technology

Proven results, speed and the absence of pain will most likely ensure high levels of patient satisfaction. With the right technology, patients will see the results you promised and develop confidence and trust in you and your services. These treatments can become the first step for a patient to feel at ease with your staff and comfortable to explore other procedures. If, however, you purchase a device that doesn't deliver results, you can greatly damage your patient relationships. Carefully evaluate and test new tools to ensure what is written on the device's glossy brochure is what you're getting.

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8. Viral value

When you have the right tools on hand to make your patients happy, the success formula becomes systematic. Laser hair removal can serve as an effective way to increase your word-of-mouth referrals, especially as it typically offers positive outcomes. When a patient buys a package or treatment, practices can see an increase in new patients by offering a "gift

for a friend" voucher, which the person purchasing the treatment can simply pass on to a friend. By positioning the promotion as a gift certificate, practices are creating a high-end coupon that will empower the patient to refer on your behalf. In fact, specific tools geared toward getting your happy patients to publicly sing your praises typically are included in the marketing programs offered by many device companies.

Looking for Lasers?

These companies offer laser products and support materials for the medical aesthetic environment.

- Alma Lasers, www.almalasers.com
- Candela, www.candelalaser.com
- CoolTouch, Inc., www.cooltouch.com
- Cutera, www.cutera.com
- Cynosure, Inc., www.cynosure.com
- DermaMed USA, Inc., www.dermamedusa.com
- DOT Therapy/Eclipse Medical, Ltd., www.eclipsemed.com
- Eleme Medical Inc., www.elememedical.com
- Hoya ConBio, www.conbio.com
- Lumenis Inc., www.lumenis.com
- Onyx Medical Inc., www.onyxmedical.com
- Palomar Medical, www.palomarmedical.com
- PhotoMedex, Inc., www.photomedex.com
- Radiancey, www.radiancey.com
- Revitalight, www.revitalight.com
- Sciton, Inc., www.sciton.com
- Solta Medical, Inc., www.solta.com
- Sybaritic, Inc., www.sybaritic.com
- Syneron, www.syneron.com
- Viora, www.vioramed.com

Making the leap

In 2009, the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery reported more than 1.2 million laser hair removal treatments took place in the United States, accounting for more than \$400 billion in sales. These growing numbers and the persistent demand from patients have caused physicians across the country to take a second look at the business of laser hair removal. To avoid finding yourself in a hairy financial situation, be sure to thoroughly evaluate the company and equipment before you make the leap into this robust market. ■■

Disclosure: Tracy Drumm is vice president of IF Marketing, which consults with many practices and aesthetic companies, including Lumenis.



Tracy Drumm, vice president of IF Marketing, specializes in marketing for medical practices. She has co-authored two books, *Thrive: Pearls to Prosper in Any Economy* (College of Cosmetic Medicine Press, 2009) and *Keys to Success: Marketing & Practice Management* (College of Cosmetic Medicine Press, 2007).

TAKE AWAYS

- Adding treatments to your practice's menu of services can help strengthen its patient list, and laser hair removal is one of the hottest treatments available.
- New technology developments and support programs from the device manufacturers make investing in a laser a smart, but involved, decision.
- Bundling packages and positioning laser hair removal treatments as time-savers helps create a more consistent, loyal patient base.
- Bringing the entire practice on board when offering these new types of services can help, whether it is in performing treatments or being aware of practice goals.
- Offering patients quality services that keep them happy encourages them to help you market by telling friends and family about your practice and referring others.