

**Say Ahhh...Designing the Med-Spa (.2 CEU):**

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**The History of the Spa:**

From the turn of the century until just a few years ago, the Medical Spa, commonly known as the “Med-Spa” was a relatively unknown entity within the continuum of healthcare facilities. There simply was no such thing as a “med-spa” or “medi-spa”. Those places where one went (mostly those with means) simply to indulge his/herself with a massage, spend time in a sauna, have a pedicure or facial, a body wrap, or even a mud bath. Medical offices were strictly places where one received medical treatment by physicians of various specialties and types.

Western medicine was not tuned into the concept of the healing effects and benefits of spas, which were deemed to be an aesthetic self-indulgence, and not part of the “established” healthcare delivery system. Western medicine was not tuned into the concept of the healing effects and benefits of spas, which were deemed to be an aesthetic self-indulgence, and not part of the “established” healthcare delivery system.

**The Healing Powers of Water:**

From the days of antiquity, through the Middle Ages, and up to the late 1800’s, medical philosophies throughout the world espoused the healing powers of water which was deemed medicinal in value, and not simply a self-indulgence. Whether the water was pumped, imbibed, bathed in, swum in, sat in, or splashed through, water was seen as a highly powerful, restorative element to health.

Professor Jonathan Paul de Vierville, Ph.D., a spa historian in San Antonio, Texas, notes that the popularity of spas has accompanied cultures with leisure time. Social bathing was an important cultural process practiced by Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Minoans, Greeks, and Romans whenever they sought health and relief from their pain and diseases. The Greeks enjoyed a variety of baths as early as 500 BC, from hot water tubs to hot-air baths, or laconica. Out of the small Greek laconica grew the Roman balneum and finally the extravagant Roman thermae (Greek word for “heat”). Before Emperor Agrippa designed and created the first thermae in 25 BC, Roman citizens had reveled in the more numerous and smaller balneum for more than 200 years.

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Each subsequent emperor created thermae more spacious and splendid than his predecessor. The Diocletian bath could hold 6,000 bathers. Thermae were built all over the Roman Empire, from Africa to England. To understand the magnitude of the Roman's love of the bath, one needs only to think of the City of Bath, England, which was established as a spa by the Romans in AD43. They built baths and a temple on the surrounding hills of Bath in the valley of the River Avon around hot springs. During the Georgian era much later, Bath became a popular spa town for decades thereafter. The thermae later became a central entertainment complex offering sports, restaurants, and various types of baths. A typical routine might begin with a workout in the palestra, followed by a visit to three progressively warmer rooms starting in the tepidarium, the largest and most luxurious room in the thermae. Here the bather would stay for an hour or so while being anointed with oils. This would be followed by a visit to the caldarium with small private bathing stalls offering a choice of hot or cold water. A visit to the hottest chamber, the laconicum, would follow.

The body was vigorously massaged and the dead skin scraped off with a curved metal tool called a strigil. The bathing ritual would end with a cool dip in the pool of the frigidarium. Refreshed and clean, the bather would then retire to the outer areas of the thermae to relax in the library or assembly room. As the Roman Empire fell, the Roman thermae became neglected and no longer used. The bath gained and lost popularity in different parts of the world – Asia, Europe, Africa, and North America – through the present day.

Baths were often built near natural hot or mineral springs and developed as important social bathing and healing places around thermal springs during the Middle Ages. In the Renaissance era, mountain mineral springs in Europe, such as in Switzerland, and in towns like Spa, Belgium, Baden-Baden, Germany, and Bath, England, grew up around natural thermal waters considered to have healing properties. The use of saunas and steam baths also emerged. As these springs and spas were discovered, forgotten, and rediscovered, the healing power of the water was often enhanced and formalized.

In 1522, the first scientific book on the Czech Karlovy Vary treatment for disease was published, in which a regimen of baths and drinking the waters of the springs was recommended. In the 1890s, Father Sebastian Kneipp developed holistic herbal and water therapy in the German spa village of Bad Worishofen.

As modern medicine evolved in the early 20th century, scientific clinics and public hospitals began to replace the spa. Existing spas responded by offering luxury accommodations, and many eventually turned into vacation locations or clinics that concentrated on weight loss, catering to the wealthy, with

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the spa origins obscured. However, the term “medi-spa” or “med-spa” was not used to refer to these establishments until recently.

#### **The Modern Spa:**

Today, the value of prevention, healthy lifestyles, and relaxation has been rediscovered, and the spa is again finding its place in modern society as a place uniquely qualified to address these needs. The wealthy no longer have exclusive use of spas. Spas now appeal to and are accessible to a much broader population.

The modern spa is an intriguing combination of ancient traditions and modern mechanical innovations. However, the core of the modern spa, just as the ancient spa, is water and the rituals that evolve around it, with the modern ritual closely mirroring the ancient rituals used at the Roman thermae, which sequence is cleaning, heating, treatment, and rest. The first step, cleaning, should be a visit to the shower to purify the body. The second step is to heat the body. Many spas offer heated whirlpools, saunas, and steam rooms. A short visit to each or any combination can heat the body. The third step is the treatment such as a body scrub and massage. The last and equally important step is rest.

There have been many additions to spa water therapies in recent times. The Jacuzzi whirlpool, a central fixture in many modern spas, was invented in the 1950s, followed by Hydrotherapy Tubs, Swiss Showers, Scotch Hoses, and Vichy Showers. In addition to these mechanical inventions, new therapeutic ways to use still water have been discovered: Floatation Therapy, Watsu, Wassertanzen, Water Dance, Liquid Sound, and Dreams and Rituals in Healing Waters have been developed. The modern day spa still embraces and celebrates its origins in water and is constantly looking for new ways to express it.

#### **The Modern Spa’s References From Ancient Times....**

Glossary of Spa Water Terms (According to International Spa Association: ISPA):

##### **• HYDROTHERAPY:**

Generic term for water therapies using jets, underwater massage and mineral baths, such as Balneotherapy, Iodine-Grine Therapy, Kneipp Treatments, Scotch Hose, Swiss Shower, Thalassotherapy, and others. It also can mean a whirlpool bath, hot Roman pool, hot tub, Jacuzzi, cold plunge and mineral bath. These treatments use physical water properties, such as temperature and pressure, for therapeutic purposes, to stimulate blood circulation, dispel toxins and treat certain diseases.

##### **• BALNEOTHERAPY:**

A generic term for mineral water treatments, balneotherapy is the traditional practice of treatments by waters, using hot springs, minerals, or sea waters to restore and revitalize the body. Since antiquity,

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balneotherapy has been used to improve circulation, fortify the immune system, as an analgesic and as an anti-stress treatment.

- **CRENOTHERAPY (CROUNOTHERAPY):**

All types of treatment carried out with mineral water, mud and vapor.

- **THALASSOTHERAPY:**

As an ancient Greek therapy (thalasso is Greek for sea), these treatments use the therapeutic benefits of the sea, and sea water products for their vitamins, minerals and trace elements, which can heal and reinvigorate skin and hair.

### **The Industry Today:**

Today both medical and non medical individuals and hospital systems are involved in the “wellness” industry. Medical spas have opened in small towns and large cities. They can be small offices or store front operations, or within mega-hospital complexes and campuses. It seems that wherever you look, a new “med-spa” has opened. On an often larger scale, wellness centers have extended their reach, to become full gyms, offering spa services, medical consultations, and nutritional services, and more.

Often, the terms “Medical Spa” and “Wellness Center” are used interchangeably. While medical spas have grown from a core clinical medical practice origin, Wellness Centers have grown from larger complexes where one often went for extensive periods of time for weight loss, as an example.

Currently, there is a blending of both terms, where day spas might add the term “wellness center” to its name. For the sake of clarity, a “medical spa” is predominately a facility which is a medical practice that either desires to have a spa-like ambience, or has extended its services to include a range of services that would ordinarily be found within the traditional spa.

A wellness center may range from a spa which provides “wellness” services, to the large hospital complexes which offer a large range of medical and nutritional services. For the sake of clarity, a wellness center is a more extensive and larger facility, originally associated with a large hospital complex. As the concept of health and wellness has taken center stage, many facilities, both large and small, may use these terms to market their services.

In order for the Interior Designer to effectively program the project, a full understanding of the unique services offered by the facility is required, and the designer must understand the extent of and types of services offered, and the needs of the staff and the end user.

### **The Advent of the Medical Spa:**

The Medical Spa is at the crossroads of BOTH the spa industry and the medical industry, with many specialties within the medical community involved in this growing trend. As defined by the

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International SPA Association, a Medical Spa is an institution whose primary purpose is to provide comprehensive medical and wellness care in an environment which integrates spa services, as well as conventional and complimentary therapies and treatments.

In essence, a medical spa is a hybrid between a medical clinic or physician office, and a day spa that operates under the supervision of medical doctor. A med spa is an establishment that offers advanced medical treatments for skin and body beautification, including chemical peels, IPL (intense pulsed light) treatments, micro-dermabrasion, photofacials, laser skin and hair treatments, and often botox and other medical and cosmetic treatments. Originally, medical spas began with dermatologists and plastic surgeons expanding their practices to offer 'higher level' spa services and treatments to their patient population.

In recent years other types of physicians, including bariatric physicians, ob/gyn's, family practitioners, homeopathic physicians, chiropractors, neurologists and even dentists, have moved towards creating spa-like medical office environments, although they may not offer the full range of services, such as massage, as those offered by some medical spas and spas.

According to Cheryl Whitman, CEO of Beautiful Forever Medical Spa Consulting in New York City, Medical Spas are quickly gaining ground on traditional spas as the fastest growing type of spa in the United States. The demand for skin treatments that offer long-lasting effects, the rapid growth of skin care technology and chemistry and the Baby Boomers' desire to maintain their looks have fueled this phenomenon.

The patient population has also expanded to include teenagers and men. Interestingly, men account for approximately 20% of the medical spa clientele, although they spend more money on services, accounting for 30-40% of overall expenditures. On the other hand, spa and salon owners who are neither physicians nor in the medical field, investors, entrepreneurs, and hospital systems have also ventured into the med-spa industry, to meet their clients' needs and to expand their brands and their profits. They have realized the lucrative aspect of extending their service range by providing more extensive services. However, depending on the regulations which vary from state to state and the services offered, the medical doctor may not need to always be on the premises.

Medical spas tend to have a more clinical atmosphere than day spas. Many also offer relaxing services such as massage and body treatments. Some medical spas have a wellness focus and include services like acupuncture, nutritional counseling and naturopathic doctor consultations. Resort style spas, day spas, wellness centers, and salons will hire a consulting physician to become part of the staff, on either a full or part-time basis, who will perform and/or oversee medical procedures.

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Cleanliness guidelines and stricter health regulations than for a normal spa are required, as more invasive procedures such as Botox and IPL laser treatments are typically performed in med-spas.

To sum up, today's spa is a center for healing and nourishing the mind, body, and spirit. People go to spas for fitness, stress management, peace of mind, pampering and pleasure, and health and wellness. Spas and med-spas can offer a wide variety of techniques and services - traditional and modern, from the East and from the West - to meet the diverse needs of their clients: Swedish, Japanese Shiatsu, and Thai massage, European facials, acupuncture, Dead Sea salt scrubs, Moor mud wraps, thalassotherapy, aromatherapy, reflexology, microdermabrasion, endermologie, reiki, aura imaging, watsu, rasul, hypnotherapy, classes in nutrition, meditation, journaling, yoga and Tai Chi, state-of-the-art fitness centers with personal trainers, and much more.

#### **Wellness Centers:**

Typically, wellness centers are larger facilities and/or institutions which have expanded as part of a hospital or healthcare complex, or a community center, although you might see day spas with signs which say "med-spa and wellness center". Many of these offices do not offer the extensive services of a wellness center, but capitalize on the trendy name.

#### **Historical Perspective of Wellness Centers:**

Accordingly to Joan Whaley Gallup in her book "*Wellness Centers, A Guide for the Design Professional*", wellness centers are facilities that incorporate clinical and fitness components into a comprehensive healthcare center, thus completing the continuum of care. The advent of managed care and the advancing age of the boomer generation are key forces which underlie the trend towards building these centers. In an illustration in her book, Gallup demonstrates the evolution of the hospital which was central to the life of the community. Many hospitals expanded into teaching institutions, while continuing to provide full service healthcare.

From there, hospitals expanded again, adding beds and services, extending their mission to provide the full "continuum of care." They reached out to the community, following the population shifts. Enabled by new technology, ambulatory care centers, urgent care centers, and assisted living and skilled nursing facilities emerged.

As part of this continuum of care model, the Center of Wellness emerges, shifting the emphasis from healing the sick to prevention, redefining the concept of the modern hospital. The evolution of wellness centers began with Ken Cooper's Cooper Aerobics Center in Houston, Texas in the early 1970's. The emphasis was on diet as it related to health, pioneered by Nathan Pritikin. In 1982, the Riverside Health System in Newport News, Virginia, began one of the first wellness center programs and projects.

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In Melrose Park, Illinois, Gottlieb Hospital was the first in the nation to create a freestanding wellness center facility, followed by the Sports Med Center for Fitness in suburban Chicago. This was developed by a group of orthopedists who created a 55,000 square foot facility. In 1991, the Galter Life Center, again in suburban Chicago, built the first freestanding urban center in the United States.

Between 1972 and 1997 over 350 wellness centers (this does not include day spas and small venues) were built in the United States. Today, there are well over 2000 centers of varying sizes and affiliations, spurred on by the growing demands of the baby boomers and the X and Y generations. While some similar services are offered in wellness centers as in medi-spas, the overall focus of the wellness center is more broad-based, encompassing an integrative, holistic approach to wellness.

Services can include diet, exercise, nutritional and other fitness programs; acupuncture; chiropractic; meditative arts; counseling; mind-body education; orthopedic and cardiac rehabilitation programs; horticulture; art journaling; childbirth coaching; life coaching; spa treatments; medical services including dermatology, plastic surgery, and others; cooking classes; massage; and more. Medical centers are becoming more involved in research regarding alternative and complementary medicine, and in creating alliances between hospital systems and complementary medical practitioners. Bastyr University in Seattle, Washington was the first accredited multidisciplinary institution of natural medicine in the U.S., providing each patient with a medical doctor, a naturopathic doctor, an acupuncturist, and a nutritionist.

According to Jeff Bensky, a leader in the development of wellness centers across the country, the driving force for the development and success of wellness centers is managed care which creates powerful incentives to control cost by placing a premium on illness prevention. In his book *"Wellness, the HealthClub/Medical Connection"* he discusses the need for prompt treatment at a cost-effective price and rehabilitation which will return patients to the workplace as quickly as possible. He suggests that fitness club entities seek out relationships with hospital partners, calling for a spirit of collaboration and positive thinking.

Wellness Centers need not only be affiliated with major hospitals or medical centers. Hotels have been implementing both day spas and med-spas, and more expansive wellness centers for many years. Canyon Ranch, with several locations throughout the country, is one such wellness hotel/spa with both "Health and Healing Centers", as well as in depth programs offered through their "Life Enhancement Centers". Their proprietary cookbooks and skin care products are sold internationally, as well.

Among their health specialists on staff are: Board-Certified Physicians, Acupuncturists, Licensed Therapists. Chiropractors, Exercise Physiologists, Healing Touch Practitioners, Movement and Aquatic Therapists, Nutritionists, Physical Therapists, and Podiatrists.

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Corporations, understanding the benefits of keeping their staff healthy in both mind and body, have constructed wellness centers on their campus.

#### **Corporate Wellness Programs:**

Corporate wellness programs are designed to nurture wellness in workers, regardless of the work environment. Corporate Wellness programs could be found in factories, corporate offices, large corporations, and small corporations alike. Having a Employee Wellness program in place can boost morale, improve health and fitness and increase productivity in the workplace. Google headquarters in Mountain View, offers massage therapy, a full gym, a hair stylist, gourmet and health conscious restaurants, and fitness classes.

#### **ISPA: The International Spa Association :**

About 18 years ago, a group of spa professionals from all over the world, recognizing the need for a voice for the industry, met to establish ISPA, the International Spa Association. As part of an ongoing endeavor to define "spa", ISPA came up with "ten domains of spa" or aspects of the industry.

To understand and organize the extensive variety of services which spas and med-spas offer, ISPA has defined the "ten domains of SPA" or segments of the industry, although not every spa includes every domain:

1. "The Waters"
2. Food, Nourishment, Diet and Nutrition
3. Movement, Exercise and Fitness
4. Touch, Massage, and Bodywork
5. Mind/Body/Spirit
6. Aesthetics, Skin Care, Natural Beauty Agents
7. Physical Space, Climatology, Global Ecology
8. Social/Cultural Arts and Values, Spa Culture
9. Management, Marketing, and Operations
10. Time, Rhythm, and Cycles

Spas and Med-spas, including salons which offer spa treatments, come in many shapes, sizes, and focuses - from day spas where you can get non-invasive treatments, to destination spas where you can stay for a week or longer, to medical spas that treat cosmetic and chronic health problems.

Designers will have ample opportunity to venture into the spa/med-spa/wellness center industry, as future growth is expanding internationally.



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According to ISPA, the number of spas in the U.S. grew at an annual rate of 21% from 1995-1999. Aggregate industry revenues grew by 114 percent between 1999 and 2001. In 2000, the size of the United States spa industry was 5,689 locations. In terms of strictly medical spas, there are more than 4,500 in the United States today.

#### **Spas & Medical Spas in Depth:**

To start the discussion of the design of Spas (including salons which offer spa treatments), and medical spas, we need to further define the differences between these types of facilities so that the Interior Designer can effectively design the space to meet all of the treatment services and sales criteria. In recent years, the boundaries and the distinctions between these entities have blurred considerably. It is no longer enough to know that the facility is a spa, salon, or medical spa only, since the mix of services can be available at each type, to varying degrees.

The decisive factors are the types of services offered and by whom. Many facilities appear to be day spas, yet they offer dermatological services with a consulting dermatologist, which may now place them in the medi-spa category.

A medical spa provides medical services within a spa environment. Traditionally, the medical world did not focus on customer service, but more on care and safety. When the word "spa" is attached to a name, clients' expectations change, with the emphasis now placed on customer service. If a medical spa fails at customer service, there will be little referral business. The culture of customer service will need to be implemented from the head of the organization, namely the Medical Director. Going even further, to drive the success of a medical spa, building a service culture must also have a sales focus with proprietary products which will reinforce the med-spa's "brand" and the bottom line.

Interior Designers need to take into consideration the following factors which play a vital role in the design development of the facility:

1. Type of care and types of services and procedures offered
2. Staffing requirements, including physicians and other medical specialists
3. Target client /patient
4. The user experience, whether it is a day spa, a salon with spa treatments, a medical spa, or a wellness center with more extensive services
5. Location of the facility: store front, freestanding, within a medical office, within a department store, at an airport, in a hotel, in a hospital, on a cruise ship.
6. Image / brand (design must incorporate this)
7. Spatial requirements based on staff needs and services offered
8. Products offered and method of sale (retail displays)

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9. Federal, state, local codes that are applicable (safety issues).
10. Furniture fixtures, and equipment appropriate for services and patient

**Services and Procedures of Spas & Med-Spas:**

Typically, the services and procedures offered at a spa and/or med-spa and performed by state licensed aestheticians, cosmetologists, and massage therapists are:

Manicures and Pedicures; Hair coloring, styling and other treatments; Body waxing,; Facials; Body treatments and massages of many types, such as reflexology, aromatherapy massage, scalp massage, deep tissue massage, salt or sugar scrubs, body wraps

The services rendered at a Medical Spa would include the services performed at a Spa, plus the following performed by a clinical aesthetician, under the auspices of the staff physician:

Microdermabrasion

Laser hair removal

IPL Photo-facials

Mild chemical peels

Endermologie

Complexion Analysis

Additionally, an R.N., N.P., or P.A., and in some states such as Pennsylvania an Aesthetician, is able to perform, under the auspices of the staff physician:

Botox; Collagen, Restylane, Radiancefiller injections; Vein Treatments; Deep Chemical peels and laser resurfacing; Mesotherapy; Thermage; Dermaplaning; Dermasweep skin infusion laser treatment.

Some medical spas are also licensed as day surgery centers and may have a wing specifically for outpatient surgical procedures. These types of facilities may do liposuction in small areas of the body, scar revisions, mole removal, upper eyelid surgery, mini face lifts, breast augmentation, and neck lifts. More extensive surgical procedures would need to be performed in a hospital surgical unit. Some medical spas may also offer nutritional services, weight management and food preparation classes, and the services of personal trainers. The Medical Director is ultimately responsible for the services of all staff in the facility.

**Physician Specialties:**

Over the past several years, many physicians have realized the profits which can be had in the spa business. The practice of medicine is, after all, a business and the bottom line does matter. With managed care, many physicians are realizing the additional income which can be derived by entering

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the industry. Dermatologists and Plastic Surgeons, considered to be “core providers”, have extended their practices by offering additional services, as well as selling products, especially those that are private labeled (their own proprietary brand).

Cosmetic surgery centers are quickly venturing into the medical spa arena. Medical spas are searching for new services to offer while cosmetic surgery practices are looking to add more nonsurgical and noninvasive procedures to their practice. A cosmetic surgery center’s facilities can often be modified for medical spa services, thereby boosting revenue and income per square foot. A plastic surgeon can legitimately, legally, medically and practically serve as a medical director for the medical spa, making this specialty one of the primary specialties to venture into the spa arena.

The industry has also extended to other “non-core providers”, such as neurologists, neurosurgeons, and others who receive additional training in skin and cosmetic procedures. Some concerns about these physicians moving into the medical spa sector have even been raised. “I think that society should be very concerned about this trend” said Dr. Larry Fields, an Ashland, Kentucky practitioner who is the president of the American Academy of Family Physicians. Since the academy began offering yearly instruction in chemical peels, Botox, and lasers, starting in 2003, the classes have been filled each year, with an ever-growing waiting list.

Other physicians worry that spas have become a patch for an ailing health care system, as the amount of insurance reimbursements fall and more doctors float their practices on treatments, such as Botox and others. Holistic and osteopathic physicians and chiropractors have also extended their practices through creating “wellness centers”, which is the foundation of the Industry. Many chiropractors, as well as medical physicians, have partnered with acupuncturists and physical therapists to offer more extensive wellness services, as well as products such as vitamins and other types of nutritional supplements.

Most states, if not all, consider a medical spa to be a medical practice with a spa-like ambience. According to California attorney Michael Cohen, a medical practice attorney:

***“Medical spas are marketing vehicles for medical procedures. If they are offering medical procedures, they must be owned by physicians. The use of the term ‘medical spa’ is for advertising purposes to make the procedures seem more appealing. In reality, however, it is the practice of medicine. “***

While the debate may continue as to what a medical spa truly is, whether it is simply a medical practice that looks like a spa, or it is a spa that offers medical services, the design features and considerations will need to respond to the functional, aesthetic, spiritual, and marketing aspects, to provide the experience that the patient consumers demand.

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#### **Branding and Design:**

With this in mind, the interior design must clearly consider the patient population, which is also the spa's "clientele". Patients are also retail clients and customers, as they may purchase the medical spa's white labeled products offered. The design of a medical spa should be viewed as an important aspect of the marketing position and brand message of the business, while maintaining a professional and dignified appearance, which transcends trends and has longevity. A medical spa is a high end retail business, and clients expect to be pampered with services properly rendered.

The starting point to a great medical spa design is to have a clear understanding of the mission, concept and program. This should then dictate all of the design elements within the office. The interior design communicates the medical spa's brand message on a very personal level, a level where patients are intimately interacting with the brand on a perceptual level.

As stated previously, the moment the word "spa" is attached to a medical office or facility, as in "medspa" or "medical spa," patient expectations need to be met through many facets of the brand, especially the design. Communicating a brand is taking the intangible and presenting it in a tangible form that can be perceived easily by the clients. The elements of color, texture, form, odor, and sound need to work together to evoke the feeling of "spaahhh", as well as confidence in expert medical performance.

#### **Ambience and Impression:**

In "*Salons and Spas: The Architecture of Beauty*" by Julie Sinclair Eakin, beauty is equated with wellbeing, and those physicians in the beauty and wellness sector have expanded traditional beauty programs in response to their patients' desires. The spa and medical spa experience can be viewed as "sacred architecture", creating both spaces of retreat or spaces of connectivity. Medical spas can certainly create spa-like ambiances with special considerations given, however, to ensuring the same clean environment in keeping with medical standards.

"Spaces of Retreat", as defined by Eakin, tend to welcome the visitor into a realm removed from the chaos of the outside world. They usually advance a holistic approach to beauty, and the use of lower light levels and natural materials may characterize their designs. The medical spa such as a plastic surgery practice would be in the category of a "space of retreat". A sense of safety must be conveyed. The ambience should be warm, quiet, sheltered from view, and one that encourages introspection.

Quiet over loudness, stillness over movement, interior over exterior views are the paradigm within the concept of "Spaces of Retreat".

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Nature is an abiding force behind the designs. River rocks, natural forms and materials, even as abstractions, are employed to convey the idea of repose.

Water is “the” key element: visually and aurally it conveys the essence of purity of both body and soul that lives at the core of each form of worship. Light, natural and otherwise, is especially significant in securing the appropriate sensibility for these calm spaces. Candlelight (electric candles are safe for commercial use and cast a natural candle light) can be used to enhance the cave like atmosphere of meditation, Diffused light can seep into the space to draw attention to spaces that lie beyond physical barriers. Hypnotic washes of green and blue tones can produce a sense of serenity. Natural stones, such as slate, limestone, and metals such as copper, add a cool and rich sensation.

Spaces of retreat are generally more contained, thereby allowing for privacy for the various treatments offered. Spaces of retreat typically will be smaller and less open, thereby enticing clients/patients to venture to more secluded zones deeper within the space or below ground such as a steam room. Curves and corners can be used to great advantage in creating a sense of obfuscation and to delineate separate spaces: a serpentine circulation pattern which can be articulated by flooring patterns and shapes to ceiling forms with curved soffits. Unique natural forms can inspire “daydreams of refuge” and provide the mental space for retreat and reverie.

While some ambiguity can help to create a sensual environment, medical spas still must keep in mind the need for environmental legibility that is clear and easily read, as is necessary in all healthcare facilities. Medical spas serve patients with a variety of abilities or disabilities and are first and foremost medical practices. A facility that is strictly a spa and not a medical spa can consider an environment that is a bit more obtuse.

Conversely, “Spaces of Connection”, particularly for certain urban spas or medical spas, can capitalize on their proximity to the energy of the city beyond their doors. They may directly afford spectacular urban views and offer cultural amenities such as restaurants, cafes, internet access, with some having salon services or beauty treatments.

### **Programming : Key Spaces:**

In developing the program for the medical spa, key areas need to be identified which are pertinent to the type of medical spa, as well as the extent of services which will be offered. Many medical spas might simply wish to create a spa-like ambience in general, whereas others may want to go further with spa offerings, beyond their clinical procedures. The following list contains spaces which may or be included in the space plan:

reception and waiting areas, tranquility lounge areas, treatment rooms, corridors, restrooms, changing

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rooms/ locker rooms, patient education / conference rooms, exercise areas, kitchen if food preparation classes are offered, counseling offices, massage rooms, clean and dirty storage /laundry, Vichy rooms, saunas / steam rooms, whirlpools , retail area and check out, café, offices, employee lounge, meditation gardens and/or rooms, recovery rooms.

After that is complete, take it to the next step and identify the sales forecast. The medical spa will be built with the projected annual sales volume as its starting point. A medical spa with projected annual sales volume of \$1 million will be designed differently than one with projected annual sales volume of \$3 million, even if the program is exactly the same. The sales forecast will predict the number of treatment rooms and retail space needed to achieve the forecast.

The next step is to identify the appropriate square footage for each area identified. A typical treatment room in a spa ranges from 90 to 120 square feet. If a laser is planned for that room, it is essential to increase the size from 120 to 140 square feet. Consult rooms need to be comfortable but feel cozy to achieve a sense of privacy and intimacy with the patient. Typically, 90 to 110 square feet for these rooms works well. If diagnostic equipment is added to the room, then add an additional 20 square feet of space should be allocated for the equipment.

#### **Lighting in General:**

Lighting is a critical component of any great design. Lighting can be utilized to provide not only general illumination, but also visual impact in certain areas within the medical spa. This is imperative, as the concept of a medical spa is to impart a spa-like ambience to a clinical setting. Wall washing sconces are important in many areas of the space, including the reception area, the corridors, massage rooms, lounge areas, and even treatment rooms as an adjunct to task and general lighting. Colored lighting for various effects can be wisely utilized and the designer should become familiar with the healing virtues of color therapy. LED lighting cove lighting can be effective in this capacity.

Treatment rooms need to be appropriately lit with task lighting (lights to clean and to perform a medical procedure) and ambient lighting. Retail cabinets should be lit from the front with directional lights to highlight product sold by the medical spa. Most med-spas will private label their own line of facial and body products, as well as nutritional products, if appropriate.

#### **The Space Plan:**

In any medical spa, the reception area is the first entry space for the clientele. There should be plenty of light, whether natural or artificial, as close to daylight color rendition as possible. The reception area may also have the retail sales area next to it. Some spas may chose to locate the retail area near the check out area in another location, depending on the program and procedure, and the traffic flow.

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Most medical spas have the reception area and check out in the same proximity, but, again, not necessarily. Depending on the services offered by the medical spa, clinical treatment rooms should be separated from the quieter massage and facial rooms. These types of rooms could be on opposite sides of the facility, with extra care given to noise reduction on the massage side of the space. The clinical treatment rooms, where medical procedures are conducted, may be noisier, with doors opening and closing frequently, as the physicians, physician assistants, and aestheticians perform their services.

The use of a “quieter” and more muted color palette will be perceived as less noisy, as well. The perception of color as a sound is known as the unity of the senses, or “synesthesia” of the senses. The corridors leading to all areas of the facility should follow the same aesthetic in order to unify the appearance of the med-spa and continue the ambience throughout. The patient will have an integrated experience and leave with the experience set into their consciousness.

Corridors can be designed to be intriguing and exhilarating, setting a tone of expectation in keeping with the treatments to be had and the patient’s anticipated results derived from them, particularly if those treatments will result in notable changes in appearance. In short, the entire experience of the “magical powers” a med-spa offers can be well designed into the space.

Physician offices need to be close to the clinical treatment rooms and separated from the massage and facial treatment rooms. In many facilities and offices, the spa treatments are in another wing. This, of course, depends on many factors: the overall budget available, whether the project involves new construction with an ample usable footprint and budget, or if the project is the renovation of an existing office with sufficient square footage.

### **Reception Stations**

Reception stations should be well designed, making a branding statement. The reception station is most likely the element in the reception area which will render the first impression and is also a functional piece of equipment, utilized by a patient registering for her/his appointment. No matter what style the facility may be, the reception station is a major focal point, welcoming the patients into the space.

While ADA requires only a portion of the gallery shelf to be at 36” AFF, the designer might consider leaving the entire transaction counter at this height. It helps to remove any barriers between staff and patients, creating a friendlier and more interactive relationship. Medical spas service the intimate aspects of individuals’ lives, and lower transaction counters psychologically can enhance the close relationship between staff and patients.

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A spa is a place where people go to relax and unwind. Medical spas are places for one's self improvement, physically and otherwise. Treatments provided at a spa are designed to awaken and stimulate the senses.

Ensuring someone has a positive spa experience involves creating a restful, soothing environment, starting at the reception area. A stunning floral arrangement at the first impression appeals to the senses and immediately sets the aesthetic stage.

One flower often found in spas is an orchid. Orchids are an attractive, fragrant flower. They generally have bright colored blooms of pink, blue, purple and red, which are often of a unique shape. You tend to see orchids planted in pots or blooms floating in water with candles.

Although they need some sunlight, they generally do not need full sunlight to grow when planted. The orchid holds many meanings. According to Sage Spa, the orchid is seen as a symbol of love, beauty, rejuvenation and fertility---emotions similar to those spas attempt to evoke for their customers.

The reception area in a medical spa must let the patient know that their needs will be attended to and that they will be pampered, within their expectations. For the most part, patients are receiving many elective treatments. The desire of every patient is to enhance or improve themselves physically, and, as a result, emotionally and spiritually. If the medical practice has expanded into offering spa services and intends to convey a "spa-like" ambience, it is necessary to ensure that the entire medical office has a spa ambience. The reception area is the where the initial impression will be made. This area relays the medical spa's brand, which includes the quality of care and treatment offered both by the physicians, as well as the entire staff.

#### **Reception Areas and Waiting Rooms:**

If the practice does not wish to renovate the entire space to become a medical space (many offices prefer to maintain their existing clinical areas), there needs to be a specific area of the office that is dedicated to "being" the medical spa, with at least a separate reception and waiting area and two treatment rooms. Whether the design is contemporary, traditional, or transitional, all furniture and finishes must meet fire and smoke density codes, slip resistance factors, and ADA codes, while creating a feeling of coziness, serenity, softness, and comfort. The challenge of the designer is to create a residential and hospitality feeling, while still maintaining the dignified look of a medical practice and ensuring the health, safety and welfare of the patients.

The reception lounge areas should offer opportunities for both privacy and for social interaction. Patients may wish to talk to other patients, sharing experiences and learning from each other, as well.



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The use of planters as dividers, a mix of types of seating, from single chairs to loveseats in leather or rich commercial woven fabrics, and displays for brochures informative of the procedures the office offers should be placed in the waiting area. It is encouraged to include a refreshment area with a credenza or built-in millwork to accommodate beverages and light food service, as well.

Flooring may be residential-looking commercial low pile, loop, or cut and loop carpet, or wood flooring, as two options. Wood flooring can be acrylic impregnated engineered wood, wood-toned vinyl planks, or commercial laminate wood flooring. Cork flooring and porcelain flooring can also be installed. Cork has a high noise reduction coefficient and, therefore, may be a good choice which adds to the spa mood. The strategic use of hospitality Type I or II wall coverings, which have a low metallic luster and reflect light, can add to the overall luxurious ambience. Recessed lighting, cove lighting and table lamps also help create a comfortable, relaxed and intimate mood.

Artwork which speaks to beauty, both of nature and human physicality, can enhance the image of the space and assist in the branding of the medical spa. Suggestions might be paintings of human forms, perhaps by famous artists throughout history, illustrating their definition of beauty. Artwork should assist in creating a relaxing mood, putting the patient at ease and calming any concerns they may have. Muted tones can be helpful and, in this instance, art selections can be made from a “decorative” perspective, as the artwork will contribute to the color palette of the space, as well.

Other subjects for artwork selections might be serene scenes of nature, with trees with broad canopies or with long perspective views. Studies have indicated that these contribute to feelings of wellbeing. Studies suggest that one is able to lose his/herself in these types of scenes, allowing one to indulge in daydreaming, which helps to relieve stress. Scenes with water are also relaxing, especially enhanced if the reception area has a water feature, with the tranquil sound of flowing water in the background.

### **Water Features in Waiting & Other Areas:**

There is no question that we humans are drawn to water. Most of us need to see water or simply be near water to feel relaxed or inspired. We love to walk along side it on beaches, be on top of it on boats, and have it in our vision as much as possible. Theories as to why we crave water are that we started millennia ago as creatures living in the seas, that we are comprised mostly of water, and that, since we are formed in a womb of water, we need to somehow find our way back to water. We need water to exist biologically. Without it, we simply cannot survive.

Evidence-based research in the healthcare sector has indicated that water plays a significant role in our lives, from our ancestral beginnings. We simply are drawn to water as a species, and viewing and hearing water can have a mesmerizing effect on our central nervous systems. Whatever the reasons may be, it is a fact that water captures our awe and our curiosity - scientifically, spiritually and psychologically. Somehow we just feel better being around water. Hearing it, watching it, even

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smelling it, simply has a transformative effect on our souls. We can rest and relax around water. It soothes our souls. That said, no where can water be more impactful than in a spa, medical spa or wellness center.

Many spas, understanding the value of water in our lives, have incorporated water features in many areas. Of special note, would be to include a water feature in the reception area. This immediately will set a relaxing tone, calming patients' nerves or helping to alleviate fears and concerns. Designers should attempt to incorporate water as a restorative feature and request sufficient funding in the facility's budget.

Built-in water fountains and features can be costly. Therefore, freestanding which could reduce the costs significantly. Gardens in planters could be constructed around these fountains, if desired to provide a more integrated appearance, or they can be freestanding as a focal point, wall mounted, or even simply tabletop. What is important is looking at and hearing the water falling, which has a calming effect on one's central nervous system.

#### **Other Features as Focal Points:**

Other important elements to incorporate into the design of the facility, particularly the reception area might be natural forms, such as rocks or stones from the local area. Natural formations, again going back to our primal archetypes or images we all share as a species on earth, beckon to us and bring the outdoors into the interior. We enjoy looking at nature, which is calming, soothing, and intriguing. Incorporating these elements into the design of the medical spa will help to set the overall mood of relaxation, making the experience more enjoyable overall.

#### **Treatment Rooms:**

The spa-like ambience can continue into the design of the treatment rooms with selections of artwork, wall coverings, and paint colors. Treatment rooms, however, also must "speak" about cleanliness and competent treatment and patient care. An accent wall with a complementary color tends to work well to draw the patient into the room and provide dimension. Accessorizing medical spa treatment rooms with plants, flowers or decorative objects is not desired, as these objects collect dust. Wall art should, however, not only consist of medical charts and illustrations, but prints that work with the overall décor.

Other important elements in treatment rooms are lighting, color, and comfort for both the patient, as well as the staff. Cork flooring is easy on one's back, quiet, anti-microbial, stain and dent resistant, water repellent, and sustainable. It is available in a variety of colors and patterns which provides opportunity for design patterns. A soft color palette in neutral tones or cool blues and greens adds to

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the ambience of the treatment room. Hues should be fresh, too. The brain translates fresh colors into fresh odors (synesthesia of the senses), which enhances the experience, as well.

Fresh or silk floral arrangements on the counter, even in the treatment rooms, always provides color and supports a spa-like feeling. Silk flowers may be preferred as a patient may have an allergy to certain flowers or scents. Aromatherapy also can enhance the space in a positive way and can provide an olfactory experience. If live flowers are desired, Gardenias have a strong aroma that permeates the space. Gardenias produce delicate, round white blooms framed by dark green leaves which produce a calming smell that stimulates the senses. It's a smell that is also in lotions and gels used for spa treatments. These plants prefer hot environments, which enables them to survive in spa treatment rooms that tend to be warmer than 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

The treatment room needs to be well lit with sufficient general illumination, as they are not massage rooms where soft lighting is preferred. Full spectrum fluorescent troffers with light shields to prevent glare work well in these spaces.

LED Interior lights on dimmer switches with occupancy sensor are another option, as are fluorescent recessed lighting. Wall lighting can be added for atmosphere, but treatments need to be performed under both general lighting and, of course, medical task lighting. Finally, it is critical to have sufficient air flow, since medical equipment can throw off excessive heat. Patient and staff thermal comfort are important and not to be overlooked.

#### **Vichy Rooms:**

A Vichy shower is a metal arm with five to seven shower heads that runs parallel to a cushioned treatment table, so one is able to receive a shower while lying down. It is usually part of a body treatment, like a salt scrub or body wrap. Instead of jumping up and getting in a shower to rinse off the salt or mud, one simply lies on the table/tub. The Vichy might be attached to the wall, or freestanding. It has a hinge so the therapist can turn the water on and adjust the temperature while it is turned away from the treatment table.

Once the water is the correct temperature and pressure, the therapist will swing it over one's body. The cascade of water is intended to feel very delightful. During a Vichy shower the client is draped with towels in private areas. It is possible to wear disposable underwear if one wishes.

Depending on the type of medical spa, a Vichy Room may or may not be part of the offerings of service. Some holistic practices may offer the Vichy bath, while other physicians may feel that this type of service should be part of the offerings of a resort or day spa and not a medical spa.

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Typically, the entire Vichy room would be tiled, with either ceramic or porcelain tiles, as this is an entirely wet process. Surfacing materials for cabinetry should be considered for their water resistance as spray from the shower can fall onto these areas, although is not directly at them. Water needs to be dried off the surface of laminates and veneers. Solid surfacing countertops are, therefore, preferred. Lighting in this room can be cove lighting on the ceiling plane or wall lighting at higher levels. Fixtures should be selected that are sealed to resist water and vapor.

#### **Other Wet Rooms:**

Not every medical spa will have in its program a sauna or whirlpool space. However, for those medical spa programs which extend more fully into the spa area, the design of the wet areas, such as the saunas and whirlpool area must be designed to address the health, safety, and welfare of the general population. Again, slip-resistant coefficients (.60) must be met to ensure that the flooring material meets the ADA requirements. Designing saunas and whirlpool areas must consider a number of elements which pertain to the health, safety, and welfare of the general population, while appealing to the spa-like atmosphere and current design trends. Anti-microbial factors of all materials need to be strictly adhered to. Quartz as a surfacing and counter top material is excellent in this area.

The designer must treat the wet areas of the medical spa with the same concern as he/she would do if designing an intensive care unit or neonatal unit in a hospital. Infection control must be contained in every way possible.

Materials which breed mold, mildew, and fungus, such as vinyl wall covering that does not have perforations to allow air flow, must be avoided. Wall coverings can be used in locker rooms, as well as anti-microbial and scuff resistant paint finishes which have no volatile organic compounds. There are many paints which have been developed which have high durability, mold control, and have no harmful off-gases.

#### **Massage Rooms:**

There is nothing like a great massage, as either a method of relaxation or as a medical treatment. The space should convey serenity, with cove lighting and/or wall lighting, music, and the feeling of softness, whether conveyed through draperies, wall coverings with fabric textures or other elements in the room. The room should have a minimal amount of distractions. Wall treatments and the color palette can have an earthy feel, with natural materials such as wood or the like. In general, colors can be cool neutrals, such as soft tan, taupe, wisteria, or sage green.

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Lighting may be incandescent in massage rooms to provide a warmer, more inviting residential feeling. The temperature of the massage room should be cooler, with the warmth coming from the heating mechanism of the massage table.

The juxtaposition of cool and warm temperatures adds sensory complexity to the experience: the cool room mixed with the warm table, and the softness of the cool sheets. These are tactile elements which create mood and comfort.

Cabinetry with earthy elements such as wood toned laminates or veneer and coppers or other metals, also convey a warm feeling. Integrated display areas may be desired to showcase products for purchase. Cabinetry should be scaled to not cramp the room, leaving a feeling of openness in the room.

Flooring in massage rooms needs to meet the ADA slip resistance coefficient of .6, and provide comfort for the massage therapists. Cork is an excellent material for massage rooms, meeting a variety of requirements. Cork is water, slip and dent resistant, and has antimicrobial factors, important in a medical facility. It is highly durable and sustainable, with a polyurethane finish for improved durability. Cork is available in a variety of colors and patterns, making it a product with endless design possibilities.

#### **Retail Areas:**

Medical spas practices typically will sell a white label line of products as a secondary income stream. This, actually, can be a very lucrative aspect of the business. Product needs to be displayed in well designed cabinetry, accented with lighting. Ample storage for inventory must be taken into consideration. Product can be stored in other areas of the office, or, as in the cosmetic departments of stores, in adjacent drawers and cabinets within the retail display area.

#### **Tranquility Lounges:**

Tranquility areas are spaces where patients can go between treatments to relax. These should be quiet areas, perhaps with a water feature or serene artwork that has comfortable seating and dimmed lighting. Colored lighting can add intrigue to the space, and private areas can be defined with sheer curtains. This adds a feeling of fancy to the space. However, these items need to be maintained frequently and must meet the NFPA 701 code for vertical flame spread. Seating in tranquility rooms should be considered for relaxation and comfort, whether the space calls for large lounge chairs or recliners. This will depend on the type of medical spa, the services offered, and its style.

#### **Meditation Spaces and Gardens:**

There is little debate that meditative spaces, whether indoors or outdoors, are restorative,

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both physically and spiritually. The mind-body connection has been well documented, and many medical spas incorporate meditative spaces into their program. These spaces may be in addition to tranquility rooms, which typically are those areas which are transitional spaces for patients or clients to rest between treatments. If space allows, there may be a dedicated space for meditation, which may also be a garden area.

If the medical spa has a meditation garden, this area must also comply with ADA requirements. The pathways must be level and wide enough for a patient in a wheelchair. Ramps are required as well. Outdoor areas can also serve for exercise, as well as for massage areas, if the medical spa desires to create a more resort feeling, or if the medical spa is within the resort complex, as may be the case.

Meditation spaces may also be housed within the interior of the space. If the room has windows, they may be covered with draperies, in order to create a more insulated, womb-like space. Low levels of illumination are required and recliners with soft cushions, equipped with pillows, add to the ambience and comfort.

#### **Recovery Rooms:**

In medical spas which perform plastic or other surgeries, a calm and restful recovery room is a necessity. A warm, residential ambience can be designed which is also a germ free environment. Bright general illumination is required, but wall scones can add to the spa-like ambience. It is important, however, to remember that a patient just had surgery, so staff must be able to perform the requirements of post-op surgery needs in sufficient lighting.

#### **ADA Restrooms:**

Restrooms for general use within the medical spa will continue to be in keeping with the design intent. A residential ambience can be conveyed while meeting ADA requirements.

Indirect lighting, mirrors with picture framing surrounding them, textured or patterned Type II commercial wall covering, slip resistant tile that closely renders stone, and cabinetry designed to meet ADA codes can contribute to this effect.

Tile patterns that are interesting and add dimension can be incorporated into spa bathrooms, along with soft lighting, both wall scones and in coves. Toilets need to also be ADA compliant, with an elongated shape and a height between 16.5" to 18".

Shower seats and grab bars must comply with ADA requirements, as well, and are available from several manufacturers in many finishes and styles which appear less institutional.

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#### **Restrooms:**

Restrooms for the staff do not need to be ADA compliant, but style is important and should be in keeping with the overall design intent. Vessel sinks and closed cabinetry for additional storage can work in these areas, as the medical staff, may wish to use the shower facilities.

#### **Patient Education:**

It is a good idea for medical spas to have a dedicated area for patient education. Patients may have questions about procedures and may want to view videos that describe various procedures offered. The style of the Patient Education area may be that of a conference room, or may be a lounge type setting. All Patient Education rooms must have space for a wall hung TV, and racks or tables where medical brochures can be offered to their clientele. Patient Education areas are intimate, quiet rooms, with sufficient lighting to allow for reading and viewing videos, yet soft enough to lend a residential ambience to the space.

#### **Furniture for Medical Spas:**

There is an extensive array of seating types for a medical spa. In the main reception area, seating can be lounge style chairs, loveseats, or sofas that have a more residential feeling, or they can be guest chairs. There may be secondary waiting areas, as well, depending on traffic flow. Other areas which require seating will be patient education areas, exam rooms, reception areas, check out areas, staff lounges, and laboratories. Many of these areas are for the various staff functions.

#### **Furniture for Medical Spas: Lounge Seating:**

Seating in patient waiting areas can vary, from lounge style sofas and chairs, to seating which is ganged together, known as tandem seating, either with or without intervening arms and legs. The type of medical spa and the clientele will determine what type of seating is necessary. Bariatric seating must be specified, and most manufacturers have incorporated this larger width into their patient seating programs.

Seating within the facility may vary, from lounge seating in the main reception area, for instance, to ganged seating in other areas. These areas may be secondary waiting rooms, which help to create a steady patient flow and keep the main reception area from becoming over crowded. Crypton fabrics which are durable and water resistance are available in a variety of weaves, including woven fabrics, jacquard fabrics, chenille fabrics, ultra suede fabrics, velvet fabrics, and even leather. Fabrics for seating in all areas of the medical spa can have a luxurious feeling, but must meet flame resistance codes, and be at least 15,000 double rubs as per the Wyzenbeek Test for durability.

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#### **Furniture for Medical Spas: Specialized Furniture: Operatory Tables:**

On occasion the Interior Designer will need to assist the medical spa with the specifications of the medical equipment, treatment tables, operatory tables, facial and massage tables, and, if required and the medical spa offers these services, the pedicure stations. A manual exam table can have an extended leg section which combines a manual gas spring assisted back with an ADA low entry height of 18.5", to aid elderly or disabled patients in entry/exit of the table used by dermatologists, plastic surgeons, and other medical professionals requiring a simple exam table while still maintaining sufficient access to the patient for minor procedures, exams, and castings.

#### **Among the typical features of operatory tables are:**

- Power lift and manual back functions
- Quiet electric gear motor
- 26" maximum width of table
- 16" vertical travel power lift base
- Low ADA compliant entry height of only 19"
- Variety of Headrests
- All steel frame and cushion substrates
- Back-mounted 21" paper roll holder
- Velcro attached upholstery
- Foot control switch auto return, stop/cancel, and any button cancellation.
- Position programmability of various heights automatically with a touch of a button

#### **Furniture for Medical Spas: Specialized Furniture: Facial Tables:**

A superior medical spa experience depends to a great extent on how comfortable the patients feel. The spa equipment and esthetic furniture can enhance the experience significantly. The designer should pay close attention to the features of the spa furniture and strive for a good balance of ergonomics, stability, ease of entry and exit, and style, as well as the durability, clean-ability, flame resistance, and anti-microbial features of the fabrics, which are typically commercial vinyl.

Esthetic furniture comes in a variety of colors, although some lines will allow a designer to specify his/her own fabric. Treatment chairs made with multi-layer cushioning is available by some manufacturers, such as ComfortSoul, which also utilized industrial strength steel, as opposed to aluminum, to reinforce all hinges. This enables a variety of both stationary and lift systems that can withstand repeated use. Prices for quality tables range from the \$500.00 to over \$2200.00, depending on the features which are desired and the quality.



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#### **Furniture for Medical Spas: Specialized Furniture: Massage Tables:**

There is a variety of massage tables from which the medical spa can choose. Some are portable, while others have integrated storage cabinets and/or drawers. These tables are available in many styles to meet the design aesthetic of choice, from traditional, to contemporary, to those which convey a Zen feeling. The designer may be asked to select and/or purchase the massage tables, as per of the furniture budget. Durability features and warranties are important to note on behalf of the medical spa.

#### **Furniture for Medical Spas: Specialized Furniture: Pedicure Stations:**

Some medical spas are fully invested in offering as many spa services as possible, if space and budget allow. Spa services can provide a large stream of additional income to the clinical practice. The designer may be asked to specify or assist in selecting the pedicure stations in the facility or may design custom stations, depending upon budgetary and time constraints, and on the overall aesthetic.

There are a large variety of individual pedicure chairs which are designed for ultimate comfort, and are available with or without a massage mechanism...a very nice feature which adds to the overall experience. Integrated units are available, as well, with many functional options and fabrics. Fabrics typically are water resistant vinyl which conveys a leather look in a variety of finishes and patterns, yet are easily cleaned and maintained. These also must meet flame and durability codes. These units are bench type seating with integrated water basins as part of the platform.

Some features include a pump system or a massage mechanism. This pump system offers the ability to use an already existing wall drain to drain the spa instead of having to install a floor drain for this purpose. Other features include adjustable leg rests and sprayers for easy clean-up.

Custom manicure stations can be designed for the medical spa, if the services have expanded in this direction. Seating for the manicurists must be selected with ergonomics, comfort, and ease of performing tasks in mind. A variety of high performance seating is available through product specific suppliers, with many features and in mostly neutral color selections, such as beige, black, and white. Custom fabrics can be used, depending on manufacturer's requirements.

#### **Furniture for Medical Spas: Specialized Furniture: Accessory Items:**

Other items of furniture and supplies which the designer may be asked to specify would be:

1. carts for products
2. portable lamps
3. Linens

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4. facial accessories
5. sterilizers
6. towel warmers
7. other items specific to the practice

**Future Trends in Medical Spas:**

For years now, hospitals have had a presence in the retail arena, through “in-house” gift shops, food court -styled cafeterias with name brand offerings, cafes, and pharmacies. These services offer revenue diversification for hospital operations. Within this arena, the medical spa is prime for additional income, as well. Medical spas, by nature, offer a variety of noninvasive or minimally invasive services, as discussed previously, among which are microdermabrasion, laser hair removal, photofacials, injectables, and fillers.

More advanced medical spas offer nonsurgical facelifts, skin tightening, cellulite reduction, fractional laser procedures, acne treatments, vein treatments, and anti-aging treatments, the next major trend in the industry, considering the number of baby boomers currently entering their 60's. Other medical spas have operatories within their facilities, which offer more invasive surgical procedures. White labeled products can produce even more revenue. According to Gary Pacquin, president of The Pacquin Group, a healthcare retail consultancy in Celebration, Florida:

**“Medical spas and similar businesses fit very well into the contemporary healthcare retail model and would represent an excellent source of alternation revenues for hospitals.”**

As an example, Rush Health Systems, a hospital operation company, has plans to develop a medical spa on their campus. The medical spa will be owned and operated by the hospital group and supported by in-house medical and support staff. According to the vice president of business development, Frank Farley:

**“We are very excited about this venture and hope to attract a host of new clients who aren't just sick but want to look good and feel good.”**

Their concept is that the hospital can leverage its reputation as a high-quality provider of care to offer elective healthcare services to its patient base, as well as to the community at large. Over time, a medical spa can be expanded to not only offer elective cosmetic medical services, but also to serve as an excellent referral source for aesthetic plastic surgeons who perform procedures at the hospital, thereby creating another income stream.

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Many hospital administrators are embracing this idea, realizing that opening a medical spa is affordable, compared to larger projects. A 2,000 square foot med-spa would cost between \$250,000 to \$500,000, including leasehold improvements, technology investments, start-up costs, and working capital.

Returns can be achieved within two years, with the strong possibility that the time frame could be as little as six months post occupancy. While many hospitals may chose to own and operate their own medical spas, there is also the possibility to work with an experienced franchisor or operator company and outsource the management and operation of the medical spa, much as is the role of hotel management companies.

Many future models for hospital involvement in the medical spa business are bound to be created, as the growing trend towards wellness, youthfulness, enjoyment, empowerment, and personal fulfillment continues to grow.

#### **Conclusion:**

From our early history, human beings have enjoyed the pleasures and indulgences of the spa experience. We have embraced the healing power of water, the nourishment of nature, and the variety of processes that restore the body and the soul. From the earliest tepidariums, to the most modern arctic rooms and laconiums, the spa has been and remains a place of comfort and the revitalization of health and wellness. As the healthcare sector has continued to grow, the spa has morphed into more extensive medical settings, offering the services of plastic surgeons, dentists, chiropractors, homeopathic physicians, dermatologists, and others.

As a response to individuals desiring to stay healthy and youthful, the medical spa has developed and will continue to develop to become a vital aspect of the continuum of care within the healthcare delivery system.

From spas, to medical spas, to complete wellness centers, health and wellness is a leading industry, and designers and architects will find a unique niche in which to specialize. The medical spa is now a major component of healthcare. Future trends suggest the possibility that one day medical spas will provide all services for the body and the mind and once again become the major community centers, as in ancient times.