



light combos

Using light therapy in combination with other treatments is more effective—and more profitable.

By Amy E. Hamaker
and Austine Mah

DAY SPA CLIENTS WANT TO LOOK THEIR BEST, and that means they've come to expect dramatic results from advanced treatments like microdermabrasion, peels and resurfacing. Those results often come with some downtime, however, thanks to inflammation, redness and minor discomfort. Combining these treatments with visible-spectrum light therapy means less downtime, producing better results for your clients and greater profitability for your spa.

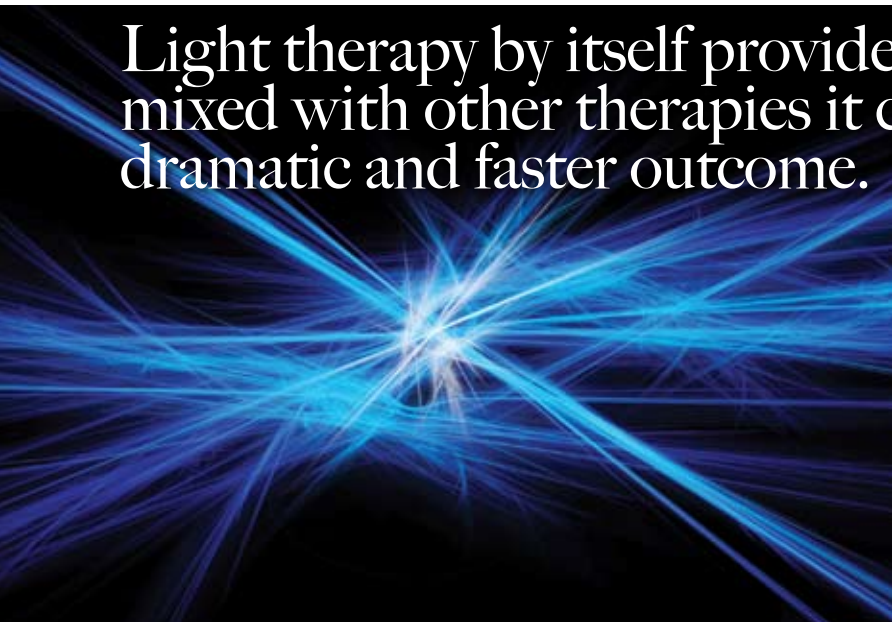
There's no questioning the value of visible-spectrum light therapy using low-energy, nonthermal photomodulation through LEDs or other types of light conductors. The technology is founded on the principle that body cells and tissues respond to light at different wavelengths by generating cellular energy and a specific chain of responses. "It takes about 21 days to visually see the production of collagen and elastin and up to three months to see the full effects of the treatment, although clients will see changes in the quality of their skin during therapy on a weekly basis," says Tony Case, president of Lumière Light Therapie (lumierelighttherapie.net), Carlsbad, California. "As collagen is vital to repairing damage done to the skin, increased collagen production will allow wounds to heal much faster with less pain, discomfort and downtime."

tion of light therapy and microcurrent. "The light therapy will increase collagen production, while the microcurrent will provide muscle toning, together having a greater impact on the client's multilayer skin rejuvenation," she says.

"For problems like acne and hyperpigmentation, mixed therapies have indeed proven more effective and faster at delivering results," agrees Dr. Christian Jurist, global educational director for Pevonia/Cosmopro (cosmopro.com), Daytona Beach, Florida. "Light therapy can be a great tool for skin rejuvenation and managing acne; it also makes the skin better able to utilize available oxygen for increased cellular performance."

Indeed, some skin conditions require a multifaceted approach for optimal results. "Acne is a great example of a skin problem needing mixed therapies,

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since its multifactorial etiology demands a diverse approach to see satisfactory results within an acceptable timeframe," says Jurist. "Often, too, clients who've received good results with a single therapy may benefit more from a multimodality treatment; the original treatment may not provide dramatic enough results, resulting in the need for a 'boost.'"

Redness and irritation from more abrasive treatments like microdermabrasion can be reduced by adding light therapy to the mix. "Light therapy is the perfect add-on to just about any esthetic treatment," says Karen Williams, national training director for Synergie/Dynatronics (dynatronics.com), Salt Lake City. "We've seen great results from applying light after waxing and microdermabrasion—in fact, a doctor here in Salt Lake City is able to perform microdermabrasion every four to five days on patients when using light right afterwards, instead of every 10 to 14 days without using light. The healing effects are outstanding."

"Depending on the wavelength used, light therapy can help negate some of the more uncomfortable side effects of abrasive treatments," adds Jurist. "Red

Why Combine?

Light therapy by itself provides excellent results, but mixed with other therapies it can offer a more dramatic and faster outcome. "We always recommend a combination therapy approach," says Danielle Tsoklis, director of education for Laval, Quebec-based Silhouet-Tone (silhouet-tone.com). "Aging happens at all layers of the skin, so you need to combine technologies to reach all those layers." Tsoklis offers the example of a client seeking skin rejuvenation for fine lines and wrinkles, and sagging facial muscles, who'll benefit from a combina-

Enlightening Philosophy

The current focus on delivering targeted visible-light therapy is on LED (light-emitting diode) technology, but there are other ways to provide specific wavelengths, says Jon Canas, president of Phytobioderme (phytobioderme.com), Mount Dora, Florida. One such method is the dichroic filter, an extremely accurate color filter that allows the passage of light in a small wavelength range. Widely used in architectural and theatrical applications, dichroic filters are created with alternating layers of an optical coating that selectively reinforces certain light wavelengths while interfering with others; by controlling the thickness and number of optical coating layers, the frequency of the filter can be made as wide or narrow as desired.

Although dichroic filters can be expensive, you may want to consider them if you practice any forms of energy therapies, says Canas. "Light therapy is often used on a 'recipe basis,'" he explains. "One color produces one stated effect—an increase in collagen production, for example. Energy medicines, however, recognize the connection between the natural components of sunlight (the seven colors of the visible spectrum) and the major physiological functions of the body. LED efficiently carries a very narrow wavelength range, from one to three nanometers, but energy medicines require all the wavelengths that constitute a color rather than just a sliver. Dichroic filters can be made to allow the necessary range of wavelengths for a color for effective energy work."

and amber lights for example, are known for their healing, soothing and anti-inflammatory properties; at the same time they can positively stimulate the homeostasis of the skin, aid in collagen formation and cellular hydration, and normalize all processes that result in skin health and beauty."

Using light therapy in combination with other treatments can also help results last longer, says Case. "Results from a treatment will start to fade after a period of two to three months," he explains. "Combining treatments with light therapy allows results to be maintained to a greater degree, so long as the client continues receiving light therapy treatments."

According to James Bressi, director of marketing for Philadelphia-based AdvanThera (advanthera.com), visible light therapy may also bring subsidiary beneficial effects. "Light therapy by itself can be used for a broad range of conditions anywhere on the body, but when used in combination with topical treatments that have a low molecular weight and don't create a barrier between the skin and the light, such as a hyaluronic serum, the light will help emulsify the product and get it into the skin."

The trick is to know which treatments to combine with light therapy for the best results.

The Right Recipes

To see the most dramatic results, combination therapy is best used for clients who have already had success with the single therapies involved. The trick is to know which treatments to combine with light therapy for the best results. According to Marcel Besse of Light BioScience/GentleWaves (lightbioscience.com), clinically studied visible-light therapy effects break down this way:

- Red light (600-660nm): vasodilation, improved blood flow and oxygenation, pain reduction; NASA has performed studies on wound healing at these wavelengths
- Yellow (or amber) light (580-600nm): photo-modulation, collagen stimulation, light activation of fibroblasts
- Blue light (410-417nm): acne suppression, surface *P. acnes* bacteria destruction

In addition, Tsoklis notes that green light at 525nm improves hyperpigmentation treatment results.



Using a red light in the 630nm range at an optimal intensity will increase the energy in the skin's fibroblasts, prompting them to produce more collagen and elastin to provide structural support and elasticity. This makes it a perfect complement to treatments that enhance collagen production, and a perfect foil for treatments that cause mild irritation. "Red light therapy applied during a professional peptide treatment can boost collagen


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“It has been proven that combining red light with microcurrent increases collagen production.”

synthesis, skin firming and many other benefits derived from a healthy increase in collagen content within the skin,” says Jurist. “It can also enhance the healing process of the skin when applied after extractions during a facial.”

Case recommends using his company’s red light in conjunction with a number of other treatments. “Red light therapy will enhance the timing and degree of results in tone/texture, and inhibit discomfort, erythema and inflammation after microdermabrasion, chemical peels and IPL/laser resurfacing; minimize pore size, lighten skin tone and improve texture in combination with microcurrent; and improve result longevity, speed recovery time, and decrease bruising and inflammation when used with cosmetic injections,” he says. “When light therapy is combined with microdermabrasion, chemical peels or laser resurfacing, you’ll see roughly a 50% increase in healing time, a 90% reduction in pain and an 80% reduction in swelling.”



Silhouet-Tone’s Soli-Tone unit was designed with an electrode in which both prongs are equipped to deliver microcurrent and light therapy at the same time. “It has been proven in clinical studies that combining red light with microcurrent increases collagen production. The combined electrodes give instant visible results at different layers of the skin,” says Tsoklis.

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Proper protocol is important for getting the right results.

An example of a popular combination in a medical esthetic environment might involve a mild alpha-hydroxy exfoliant, such as lactic acid, followed by blue light

therapy for acne, says Jurist. “You’d use blue light therapy immediately following the exfoliation (and as long as any inflammation had subsided) to tackle bacterial and seba-

ceous components,” he says. “Blue light therapy can still deliver these benefits even when performed 24 to 48 hours after the exfoliation.”

Jurist also recommends lactic acid as a mild resurfacing and lightening agent for hyperpigmentation problems when used in a peeling formula. When followed by green light therapy on the pigmented areas, both treatments will help inhibit tyrosinase production, lessening pigmentation problems.

Proper protocol is important for getting the right results, says Bressi. “If you’re combining microdermabrasion or microcurrent and light therapy using two different units, the light therapy would be performed as the second step to help calm skin disruption, promote healing and enhance results,” he says. In addition, healing light therapies can typically be done up to 48 to 72 hours after the initial esthetic procedure to maintain results, says Jurist.

“We apply light therapy *after* most treatments,” agrees Williams. “The exception would be during a cellulite treatment on the body—then we use the light beforehand. This allows the client to continue to wear the compression garment (bodysuit) after the cellulite treatment.”

Contraindications for combined therapies would mirror those for individual treatments:

- Light therapy shouldn’t be administered to clients who are currently using medication that causes light sensitivity.
- As a general rule, mixed therapies shouldn’t be performed over infected or oozing lesions until they heal, or on unknown and/or persistent conditions without consulting a doctor.
- According to Jurist, some light therapy devices may emit small

“Combination therapies are an integral part of a service menu.”

to moderate amounts of thermal energy through their light sources, worsening inflammation in predisposed or sensitive skin types.

Combo Menu

Properly pricing combined therapies is the key to increased profits for your spa. “You should price a combination treatment at a

more expensive level than a regular facial, but not out of reach,” says Tsoklis. “The price will vary according to factors like location and overhead costs, but a good price for a 30- to 60-minute treatment with facial equipment use, microcurrent, microdermabrasion, light therapy and transepidermal delivery of product might range from \$150 to \$325.”

“We price the light therapy as an add-on to the original service, since it takes only 11 to 14 minutes to fully treat the face with our unit,” says Williams. “Depending on the market, we usually see spas charging an additional \$25 to \$45 for the addition of light therapy.”

Bressi recommends charging a 50% premium over what a service currently runs. “If you charge \$100 for a microcurrent treatment, charge \$150 for the treatment in combination with light therapy. It’s also smart to create a second tier of series packages with light therapy added—an Ultimate Skin Renewal Facial series as an upgrade to a Skin Renewal Facial series,” he says.

“Combination therapies are an integral part of a service menu of rejuvenating, hydrating and soothing treatments,” says Jurist. “Always explain the benefits of each of the combined therapies in the mix, and the overall benefit of the combination, and then price the mix to entice clients to get more benefits at a reduced cost over the individual treatments. When clients learn that the therapies are less expensive if purchased together, the whole strategy turns into a win-win situation for them and for the spa.” ●

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