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Preface

There just isn’t enough information. Why isn’t there more information? Why isn’t there more information? As the leader of a network of medical skin care clinics, I have heard these questions asked over and over. For the last seventeen years I have spent my days managing medical spas. Part of my job as the President and CEO was the development and oversight of the training programs for our facilities. Needless to say, I have met and trained many clinicians. What I notice is that my first-rate, curious clinicians (aesthetician or nurse) can never get enough information. They are always looking for more information, improved technology to provide advanced results, a new book and more and more! While these questions are obvious signs of a good clinician, they are wrought with peril since unbiased information isn’t always available.

This book is intended for those who are studying to become first-rate clinicians, as well as the clinicians who thirst for more information, expanding on what they already know. That said, this text is written to expand on the basic knowledge of aesthetician training, and take it from a conceptual level to the practical level.

I have researched and written this book so that I could satisfy that hunger that makes a great aesthetician, particularly in the area of microdermabrasion. Microdermabrasion has developed into one of the most popular procedures in the skin care industry. However, only minimal research exists on the efficacy of microdermabrasion. The research that does exist has shown remarkable results in the improvement of both the epidermis and the dermis. Microdermabrasion can provide extraordinary results for qualified candidates. The treatment can also provide extraordinary results for those who are not necessarily qualified, but have realistic expectations. This book takes modern research, facts, and opinions, and shapes them into a start-to-finish model. This model has one fundamental intent: ideal results for the clinician and the patient alike.
This clinical handbook for microdermabrasion is my answer to the chants for more information. The chapters are organized, one on top of the other, with essential, must-have information on microdermabrasion. To this effect, general knowledge is expanded upon, and insightful hints and recommendations allow you to optimize your knowledge and achieve the optimal, replicable results which will insure your success. Each chapter has questions and “Top 10 Tips to Take to the Spa,” which will help you well beyond your training, and give you the knowledge that is helpful well beyond the classroom. Also, you will see several case studies of our patients, how we selected them, what we accomplished, and how their result evolved. The book was developed to help you learn the basics of microdermabrasion while adding information that will allow you, the clinician, to develop, refine, and redefine your microdermabrasion skills.

Good luck!
About the Author

Pamela Hill, RN, CEO, received her diploma from Presbyterian/St. Luke’s Hospital and Colorado Women’s College. She followed through to practice as a registered nurse for more than 20 years with her initial emphasis in cardiac surgery and then in cosmetic surgery and medical skin care. In 1992, Ms. Hill founded Facial Aesthetics®, a network of medical skin care clinics in association with John A. Grossman, M.D. Since then, Ms. Hill has been an industry pioneer in the growth and development of the medical spa industry. As the president and chief executive officer of Facial Aesthetics®, Ms. Hill has been a proactive member and pioneer in the evolution of the medical spa model and the integration and union of cosmeceuticals and nonsurgical skin care. In addition to her leadership in the medical spa industry, she has also been actively engaged in the research and development of the successful Pamela Hill Skin Care product line.

Ms. Hill has devoted her passion for nonmedical skin care to the instruction of a higher level of education and skill for those aspiring to be the aestheticians of tomorrow. To further this mission, Ms. Hill founded the Pamela Hill Institute® in 2004.
Reviewers

The author and publisher wish to thank the reviewers for their assistance and expertise in reviewing this text. We are indebted to them.

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It is hard to know where to begin to thank those who have been instrumental in helping me achieve the goal of publishing Milady’s Aesthetician Series: Microdermabrasion, 2nd edition. When I accepted the opportunity to create a medical aesthetic series, my husband wondered whether I had lost my mind. He worried that I would have time to do little else but sit in front of my computer; he was right. Therefore, my first thanks goes to my husband. Always at my side, he has been my best critic, my beacon of light, my teacher, and my best friend, without whom this book would not exist.

There are many other people to thank, including the staff at all of my clinics, who supported me, taught me, and rallied me on to the goal line. However, two individuals at my clinics stand out. First, thanks to Carmella, the aesthetician who took care of the patients represented in this text, saw the patients, worked on the programs, and ensured the photographs were taken. Without her help we would not have achieved our goals. In addition, Christian Sterling was in the “writing dugout.” He has been with me each day, documenting references, conducting research, and helping me stay focused. Without these two very dedicated colleagues, this book would never have been completed.

Additional thanks go to those at Milady who believe in my message and supported me through this process.

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Introduction to Microdermabrasion

Key Terms

- acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)
- aluminum oxide crystals
- anatomy
- appendages
- Ayurveda
- career plan
- Chi
- CO$_2$ laser
- continuing education units (CEUs)
- contraindications
- corundum
- cosmeceutical
- deep-epidermal wounding
- dermabrasion
- downtime
- dyschromia
- epidermal cells
- erbium laser
- ergonomically correct
- exfoliate
- four humors
- glycolic acid
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)
- hepatitis
- herpes simplex (HSV)
- Hippocrates
- Hippocratic oath
- human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- hypopigmentation
- indications
- Jessner’s solution
- keratolysis
- lymphatic drainage
- mission statement
- nonsurgical aesthetic skin care
- open systems
- papillary dermal wounding
- physiology
- post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (PIH)
- professional ethics
- progressive improvement plan (PIP)
- reflexology
- spa protocols
- stratum corneum
- stratum granulosum
- technique-sensitive
- trichloroacetic acid (TCA)
- yin and yang
Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter you should be able to:

1. Describe the history of microdermabrasion.
2. Discuss the value of clinical training for microdermabrasion.
3. Discuss variations in licensure regulations and insurance requirements.
4. Name the career options available with microdermabrasion training.
5. Understand the key points of professional ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Lines, wrinkles, and sagging skin were once considered irreversible consequences of the aging process. Earlier generations begrudgingly accepted them as a rite of passage into the golden years, wearing their lines proudly as testament to their survival of war, depression, and oppression. Today, such is no longer the case. Nowadays, the signs of aging are unwarranted and unwanted. As the Baby Boomers pass into their own golden years, they have been responsible for the creation of a multibillion-dollar industry called nonsurgical aesthetic skin care. Wanting to sustain a youthful appearance, Baby Boomers and the generations that follow them have forced our industry to develop products and services to meet their needs. Among those services is microdermabrasion. Microdermabrasion can be a simple procedure or a single step in a multifaceted treatment. It is a treatment with great range and the opportunity to improve the skin with little or no downtime to the client—just what the doctor ordered!

In the early 1990s, microdermabrasion was considered to be a new treatment with its fair share of naysayers and skeptics. Since then, microdermabrasion has been scientifically and histologically proven to improve the appearance of the stratum corneum and the integrity of the underlying layers of the skin. With proper programs and a monthly commitment from your client, a remarkable difference in the skin can be made.

Microdermabrasion has expansive appeal to young and old alike. With many positive attributes to recommend it—low complication rates, rapid and predictable results, no anesthesia requirement, low discomfort, safety, and little client downtime—clients and aestheticians alike prefer microdermabrasion as a monthly skin treatment.
Progress in medical science and cosmeceutical research has made great strides in our ability to treat the skin and generate nonsurgical results. Looking good means looking younger, and our society puts a high price on the commodity of youth.

**Evolution of Skin Care**

Skin care has held a place in every culture (including Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Indian, and African) through to the present day (Figure 1–1). From decorating and celebrating to masking and concealing, every culture throughout time has placed a value on faces and how they look. Today, a much more scientific and medical approach is used which not only enhances the appearance of our faces but also improves it down to the cellular level. Presently, the medical and aesthetic arts continue to converge. Although the two seem distant cousins, both are of ancient origin.

The Chinese were the first to understand medical fundamentals that are still practiced today. Traditional Chinese medicine dates back over 5,000 years to the writings of Fu Xi. His texts, called the Trigrams, relied on the theories of yin and yang. Yin and yang represent harmony between nature and its daily phenomenon. The Yellow Emperor of the Han Dynasty later wrote of the need for a "positive physician-client relationship." The Chinese methods involving Chi, the balance of

---

**Figure 1–1** Evolution of skin care; line depicts the progress of skin care.
nature and imbalance of illness, are important foundations on which contemporary Western medicine was constructed.¹

In ancient Egypt, materials were commonly used to enhance the skin’s appearance. Ancient Egyptians routinely used animal oils, alabaster, and salts to this effect. Some Egyptian women even soaked in sour milk, unaware that the lactic acid was the source of their positive results. In addition, the Egyptians are credited for inventing the process of distillation, which they used to extract oils and other essences for use in both ceremonial and aesthetic contexts.²

Simultaneously, physicians in ancient Greece were making medical and aesthetic advancements of their own. Hippocrates had named the four humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile), the balance of which he hypothesized defined a person’s character. Hippocrates also created the Hippocratic oath, which is still taken today by doctors and requires that those in attendance work cohesively (a point that has modern-day relevance for students reading this text). Concurrently, the Greeks also used accessories and adornments to enhance their physical appearance, including using pigments such as vermilion to enhance facial coloration.

From then on, many other cultures compounded previous knowledge and learned their own techniques in both medicine and aesthetics. The Indian concept of Ayurveda, or science of living, became part of the foundations of Western medicine. In Africa, colorful decorations on the body were offered as gifts to the gods. Different colors and their use in varied combinations reflected equally varied meanings, many of which are still celebrated today. Similarly, Native Americans wore elaborate beads and headdresses for hierarchical and aesthetic purposes. Native Americans also were quite adept in herbal wound healing—a skill they shared with their new neighbors, the European immigrants.

During the Renaissance, amazing breakthroughs in science and technologies of all kinds made medicine more reliable and aesthetics more beautiful. During the Victorian Era, elaborate gowns, headdresses, and makeup made women stand out—or at least the very wealthy ones.

Some of the most remarkable advancements in medicine and aesthetics, however, have been made in the last 25 years. Understanding epidermal cellular migration, dermal collagen content, and wound healing has allowed the development of procedures and products that can truly affect the skin. Notably, though, these advancements created chaos and fragmentation in industries such as the retail product industry, the medical industry, and the spa and skin-care industry. The medical industry is further fragmented into those who treat skin disease and those who treat skin aging, leaving consumers many choices. Combine
these choices with the abundance of products and services that claim to fight the effects of aging, and consumers may wonder: Where do I go and for what? For all of these reasons and much more, advanced skin care has “gone medical” and is creating a name for itself.

HISTORY AND ORIGINS OF MICRODERMABRASION

The idea of “sanding” the skin to improve its appearance is a longstanding technique used by plastic surgeons and cosmetic dermatologists. Whether the physician is using a small wire brush or pieces of actual sandpaper to abrade the skin in combination with chemical peeling, surgeons have had success with sanding the skin to improve its appearance.

Although microdermabrasion is not a surgical resurfacing tool, it has its origins in surgical resurfacing procedures such as dermabrasion. Microdermabrasion and dermabrasion have one broad similarity: Both procedures start from the premise that sanding the skin will improve its appearance. Obviously, it is the depth of the procedures and the number of treatments that significantly differ.

Like dermabrasion, microdermabrasion also resurfaces the skin, but the apparatus (crystals versus wire brush or sandpaper) is different and the depth is more superficial. Microdermabrasion also has much broader applications, addressing fine lines, dyschromias, texture issues, acne scarring, small scars, and solar keratosis.

Microdermabrasion was originally developed in the early 1980s. Early microdermabrasion machines were simple but had several problems. The machines were created as open systems, which meant that the user poured the crystals from a storage container into the machine and discarded the crystals by letting them flow into a trash receptacle. This open system was problematic for two reasons. First, the crystals could spill and the crystal dust could land on the floor, counter, and chair of the treatment room. Second, there was also concern that the aluminum oxide crystals, or corundum, might precipitate Alzheimer’s disease in aestheticians or clients who inhaled particles. Although this concern was disproved, aestheticians are still encouraged to wear masks when doing microdermabrasion. Next-generation machines had several improvements, including a closed crystal system, use of disposable tips and filters, and the addition of equipment such as ultrasound to improve the absorption of topical products.

Today, each microdermabrasion machine seems to have special elements such as ergonomically correct handpieces, infusion systems,
completely enclosed crystal systems including filters, and compact units that can be carried without difficulty by the aesthetician. Whatever you desire in a microdermabrasion machine, no doubt you will be able to find the machine to fit your needs.

**Microdermabrasion Defined**

The truest definition of *microdermabrasion* is “polishing” of the skin, specifically the *stratum corneum* and *stratum granulosum*. The process involves vacuuming fine aluminum oxide crystals through a handpiece held at a 45-degree or 90-degree angle. As the crystals move through the system, striking the skin, they *exfoliate* and then are returned to the enclosed disposal canister.

In the microdermabrasion treatment, several varying components will have an effect on the end result: the type of crystals used, the machine and its functional use (speed, the handpiece, tips and infusion serums), and of course, the aesthetician (Figure 1–2). These components are discussed here but will be described in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

The type of crystals used for microdermabrasion varies (Figure 1–3). In addition to aluminum oxide crystals, salt crystals or sometimes diamond-encrusted tips can be used. Microdermabrasion with salt crystals is known as a *salt peel*; diamond-encrusted tips more closely resemble a traditional dermabrasion apparatus.

The machine and how it is operated will also have an effect on the result. Misusing the machine could injure the client and the aesthetician. The most common mistake made in the use of a microdermabrasion treatment machine is in the treatment depth, which is controlled by three variables: (1) the strength of the flow of the crystals, (2) the speed of the handpiece over the skin, and (3) the number of passes made. These details will be discussed in depth later in the text.

The third and most important determining factor for positive results is aesthetician training. Improper training or misuse of equipment will have negative consequences for the aesthetician, client, and spa. This is why regimented and thorough training is a necessary component to any microdermabrasion treatment plan.

**Benefits of Microdermabrasion**

The most common, expected, and visible result a client will see after microdermabrasion treatment is obvious—a deep exfoliation that leaves the skin healthier and more refreshed. It appears this way because older, drier, dead skin is removed at a pace that the natural sloughing process cannot match. The loosening and removal of this debris makes room for newer and more vital skin cells to reveal themselves.
Many aestheticians using microdermabrasion as a primary spa treatment will report auxiliary benefits. Among the additional benefits the client may see are tighter skin, reduction in T-zone oiliness, and possible temporary pore size reduction. From a scientific point of view, the skin might be tighter. More than one study has demonstrated that microdermabrasion acts not only on the epidermis but also the dermis. Additionally, one might be convinced that regular microdermabrasion treatments reduce the oiliness found in the T-zone. Finally, many clients and aestheticians alike hope that pore size will decrease. Although aestheticians may initially see a reduction in the size of the pores, the reality is that pores will not shrink. One can think of pores like the lines of the hand. Once the imprint has been established, it is there to stay.

**Microdermabrasion versus Other Treatments**

Microdermabrasion is often compared with other treatments such as glycolic acid, Jessner’s solution, and trichloroacetic acid (TCA) peels, and surgical laser resurfacing treatments. These comparisons are really not appropriate—because of its unique benefits, microdermabrasion is in a class by itself (Table 1–1). However, many of these peels and advanced treatments such as LED and FotoFacial™ are being combined with microdermabrasion to create a treatment plan that is more advanced than microdermabrasion alone. Combining these techniques creates an improved outcome for the client.

Light and moderate-depth peels have many of the same indications as microdermabrasion treatments, including light acne scarring,

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<td>Reduce pore size&lt;br&gt;Eradicate all rhytids&lt;br&gt;Remove telangiectasia&lt;br&gt;Remove deep scarring</td>
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<td><strong>Jessner’s solution and glycolic acid peels</strong></td>
<td>Reduces rhytids&lt;br&gt;Improves photo damage&lt;br&gt;Improves hyperpigmentation</td>
<td>Reduce pore size&lt;br&gt;Eradicate all rhytids&lt;br&gt;Remove telangiectasia&lt;br&gt;Remove deep scarring</td>
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<td>Reduce pore size&lt;br&gt;Eradicate all rhytids&lt;br&gt;Remove telangiectasia&lt;br&gt;Remove deep scarring</td>
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dyschromia, rough texture, and fine lines. Peels, however, create deep-epidermal wounding and papillary dermal wounding, something that microdermabrasion is not intended to do. Peels use a solution to melt epidermal cells and exfoliate the skin rather than the mechanical means of the microdermabrasion treatment. Peels act differently on the skin by causing separation of the layers of the epidermis (keratolysis) and then sloughing off those necrotic layers. Additionally, peels require some downtime for the client to peel and heal. Due to penetration depth, peels can also pose a slightly higher risk of scarring, infection, and post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (PIH). However, both light to moderate peels and microdermabrasion create enough minor injury to stimulate collagen remodeling in the dermis and new collagen formation.

Resurfacing lasers cause epidermal and papillary dermal injury. Three major types of skin-resurfacing lasers exist: (1) the CO₂ laser (2) the erbium laser and (3) Fractionated. The CO₂ laser vaporizes the skin and in doing so causes a thermal injury, which in turn causes additional improvements in the dermis through collagen formation.

Unfortunately, because of the aggressive nature of CO₂ laser, the skin is at great risk for hypopigmentation. The erbium laser can also cause epidermal and papillary dermal injury, but this “lighter” laser does so with little thermal injury; therefore the result is somewhat less than the CO₂ laser-resurfacing procedure. The erbium laser also creates a slightly lower risk of hypopigmentation. Fractionated under the trade
names Fraxel or DOT cause a pixel injury to the skin. In this fashion it leaves some areas of the skin untouched promoting faster healing.

None of these surgical resurfacing procedures are valid comparisons to microdermabrasion because of the length of downtime, pain, required anesthesia, potential for complications, and possible scarring.

TRAINING

Because microdermabrasion treatments are technique-sensitive, aestheticians must understand the process of microdermabrasion, the importance of home products for the skin, and proper management of aftercare (all important factors for success) before they attempt the procedure (Table 1–2). The training process for microdermabrasion should not be left to the microdermabrasion machine vendor, although the vendor is a good resource of information about how a particular machine functions and for troubleshooting. Many states now have a required number of hours in microdermabrasion theory and practical application to achieve licensure. This is a step in the right direction but still does not provide the medical spa, physician, or employer with the level of confidence necessary. The medical spa should take training very seriously and have access to a trainer who will follow the spa’s protocol for learning.

Microdermabrasion training should take place in a dedicated class that addresses theory and hands-on practice. The classroom work should include a review of the anatomy and physiology of the skin, the basics of wound healing, the indications and contraindications of treatment, and the fundamentals of at-home skin programs. The course

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should require familiarity with spa protocols for microdermabrasion and the variety of available treatments and programs. Once the student completes the classroom work and has passed the recommended examination, he or she can move on to hands-on, clinical training.

The clinical-training program should focus on technique. Critical to the aesthetician’s ability to replicate the treatments are his or her use of the handpiece, the pressure of the handpiece against the skin, and the number and direction of passes. The ability to reproduce a treatment comes with practice; therefore, extra time should be built into this arm of the training process. The aesthetician should not provide microdermabrasion treatments to clients until he or she has completed a thorough clinical-training program. Too frequently, this potentially harmful piece of equipment is put into the hands of untrained personnel. Although complications are generally minimal from microdermabrasion, we should not be misled into thinking that complications are nonexistent.

Classroom Training

As previously mentioned, classroom training is the starting point. This section of the training program should start with a review of basic information. The review process can be accomplished through a simple workbook, online courses, DVDs or traditional classroom sessions. It is important that it is done and that the aesthetician proves his or her work by passing a simple examination with a score of at least 80 percent.

Anatomy and physiology reviews should include information about the layers of the skin and their physiology. Because microdermabrasion affects both the epidermis and the dermis, both layers and all the sublayers of the skin should be reviewed. The anatomic structures identified as the appendages of the skin should be relearned in greater detail. A broad theoretic understanding of the indications and contraindications for microdermabrasion should be discussed. Aestheticians should also learn about the principles of wound healing so that they are aware of the potential injuries and how to manage the care. A thorough discussion of the spa’s policy regarding the home care products and pre-treatment will help the aesthetician to be prepared when he or she greets his or her first client in the treatment room. Finally, some of the classroom time should be spent reviewing the spa’s microdermabrasion policy and procedures, as well as the aesthetician’s expectations.

Clinical Spa Training

In the spa segment of the training, the aesthetician should be working one-on-one with the spa educator or instructor to master the use of the

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spa protocols
Any set of rules or guidelines established by a spa for safe practice; guidelines will vary by location but are expected to be observed by aestheticians working within the individual spa.

appendages
Anatomic structures associated with a larger structure; for the skin, appendages include hair follicles and sweat glands.

indications
Any sign or circumstance that a particular treatment is appropriate or warranted.

contraindications
Any sign or symptom that a particular treatment that would otherwise be advisable would be inappropriate.
microdermabrasion equipment. The clinical spa training should be directed at three specific processes: (1) the consultative process, (2) the microdermabrasion technique, and (3) the pre- and post-treatment homecare programs (Figure 1–4). When learning about the consultative process, the aesthetician should take the specifics learned in the classroom, such as indications and contraindications, and apply them appropriately to specific skin types and clients’ complaints. When focusing on the microdermabrasion technique, aestheticians should work on the specifics of the treatment, including pressure, stroke angles, number of passes, and tautness of the skin (see Chapter 9) while performing a treatment (Figure 1–5). Finally, home adjunct therapy for the client is a critical component of the long-term success of the spa program.

The spa must require at least 10 model clients with varying skin types and concerns to be treated before treatment of clients. A spa examination is also required to ensure the aesthetician understands his or her particular machine and the application of the microdermabrasion treatment.

Training Protocols
Training protocols are those documents that help you to understand the processes deemed acceptable for training. Protocols address subjects such as who can be trained, how the training takes place, and the necessary test scores to be approved as a skilled microdermabrasion
aesthetician. Each spa should have a protocol to guide its behavior and options for training.

Training Requirements
The protocols should list the training requirements. These training requirements are the specific actions that must take place for the aesthetician to be placed into a training program and, after completing the training, to be released to treat clients. Three important points regarding training requirements bear repetition: (1) the aesthetician must have a current and valid license in the state in which he or she is practicing, (2) the physician or spa manager should recommend that the aesthetician be trained for the procedure, and (3) the aesthetician must score at least 80 percent on the theoretic testing and at least 90 percent on the spa testing.

Evaluating Aesthetician Skills
Although testing is a great tool to evaluate the student through the treatment-related educational process, it is not always an accurate indicator of the aesthetician’s true spa abilities. A simple checklist for the aesthetician and the spa instructor might be useful. This skill list should include tasks such as draping the client, client communication skills, home program evaluation, and the ability to orient to the physical space.
**Microdermabrasion Protocol Training**

Standard policy and procedure  
Pamela Hill Institute  
Training and certification for microdermabrasion  

**Date of Origination:** June 1996  
**Creator:** Pamela Hill, RN  
**Date of Review:** June 1997  
**Revisions by:** S. Smith M.E.  
**Policy #:** 01-001  
**Attachments:** Policy and procedure document for microdermabrasion, certificates of completion, written test, spa test  
**Title of Policy:** Training and certification for microdermabrasion  
**Policy:** All spa staff will be licensed and insured in the state of employment. Certification through the company training program is required prior to client care.  
**Purpose:** To ensure that all spa staff employed by the company are properly trained and certified in the techniques, policies, and procedures through the company training programs  
**Scope:** All spa personnel  
**Definition:** Spa aesthetic personnel  
**Procedure Indications:** All aestheticians seeking certification will be recommended to the training program by their supervisors.  
**Testing if Necessary:** Score of 80 percent or greater on the written examination is required before proceeding to spa training. A score of 90 percent or greater on the spa examination is required to treat clients.  
**Required Reading:** Articles and technical information, provided by the instructor  
**Classroom Training:** The training will consist of two classroom days. The curriculum for these days includes a review of anatomy and physiology of the skin, wound healing, principles and techniques of microdermabrasion, and home care regimens for microdermabrasion. A written test will be administered at the conclusion of the 2-day classroom course. A score of at least 80 percent is required to move to the spa training.  
**Spa Training:** The aesthetician will be responsible for finding 10 models on whom to practice the microdermabrasion treatment. These models should have different skin types and different skin problems. It is preferable that the models have not had any previous skin care or treatments. A full consultation is done, followed by a treatment. The aesthetician will need to prove competency in consultation skills, the development of home programs, and the techniques of microdermabrasion described in the policy and procedure document. A passing score of 90 percent is required on the training to be released to treat clients.  
**Aesthetician Requirements:** Licensed professional  
**Aesthetician Required Training:** Certificate of completion in a microdermabrasion course with a state-recognized school or company training program
These skill sets and those identified in Table 1–3 will help the aesthetician expand his or her knowledge.

### Table 1–3 Additional Aesthetician Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spa Skills</th>
<th>Score 1–10</th>
<th>Recommended Improvements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communications Skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sales abilities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Safety Skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wears protective gear</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understands machine</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Charting</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Understands the record</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makes appropriate notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Takes pictures</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Products</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Understands product lines</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Professionalism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriate to client</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriate to peers</td>
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**Continuing Education**

Educational updates can take place by three methods: (1) an annual recertification process through the spa, (2) continuing education units (CEUs) obtained at meetings, or (3) online study and education. Annual recertification processes within a spa usually have two phases. The first phase is through self-managed workbook reading and quizzes. These workbooks can be printed or put on your intranet (an efficient
way of managing the process). The second phase is the spa recertification. This recertification is the process by which the spa educator or physician observes the aesthetician treating clients. The educator uses a score sheet to evaluate the aesthetician in all areas of the treatment room, including the actual treatment, cleanliness of the room, professionalism with the client, and so forth. The score on this evaluation must be at least 90 percent. If the aesthetician does not achieve a passing score, a problem-solving document called a **progressive improvement plan (PIP)** should be implemented to help the aesthetician improve his or her treatments.

The next approach to ensuring educational updates is by requiring recognized CEUs. For example, for nurses in some states such as California, this is a requirement to renew the registered nurse (RN) license. This concept is now being translated to aestheticians as some states begin to require continuing education to renew licensure. CEUs can be obtained at annual meetings of professional organizations. Each year, one or two people can be selected from the spa to attend the annual meetings. Although expensive, these meetings are usually very illuminating and help the aesthetician to stay current on the newest products and services. If some aestheticians at the spa cannot attend the meeting, the returning aesthetician should give a report and provide copies of any relevant handouts.

Finally, learning can take place through a variety of Web sites or DVDs that are dedicated to education on the Internet. These sites provide recognized CEUs or simple educational information.

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**CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**

Career opportunities abound for the educated and skilled medical aesthetician and cosmetic nurse (Table 1–4). Creating a **career plan** for success is the first step to realizing your dream. Many professionals in the area of self-improvement recommend identifying the goal and working backward to achieve that goal.

Using this technique, identify where you want to be in five years and what you want to be doing. Then create a list of objectives to achieve the goal. For example, if you are currently an aesthetician without medical experience and you would like to be in a medical office as a microdermabrasion specialist, identify objectives that will allow you to meet the goal. Find out where to gain the training, expertise, and experience that will allow you to be a valued employee in a medical setting. Identify internships or learning situations that will help you to perfect your spa skills. Take communication courses that will help you to learn how to communicate with clients, peers, and superiors in a medical setting. Take sales training should be part of a yearly self-improvement plan. After you graduate from school, plan to take at least one course a year about a new subject that will add depth and power to your résumé.
courses that will help you to make a contribution to your employer and to yourself. Learn the basics of building a business. Create a professional résumé, and practice interviewing skills that will help you to get the job.

Marketing yourself to a business will become an important skill in acquiring the right job. Whether you want to land a job in a medical spa, a destination spa, or a holistic spa, the tactics you use to get there will be the same. Remember, just as you are looking for the perfect job, the employer is looking for the perfect employee. Not every opportunity will be a good match for you or the employer, and that is okay. Understanding the components of a good match will be the key to long-term success. By marketing yourself, you will have a sound understanding of what positions will be a good match for you personally.

Several components of marketing yourself should be addressed, including your value and values, your integrity, your skills, and your needs. Before looking for a job, it would be worthwhile to write out information for each category. This exercise will help you to ask potential employers the right questions, which will assist in your own determination. You can also use it to practice interviewing with a friend. Remember, you are interviewing the employer as much as the employer is interviewing you, so you should be well-prepared.

Values are defined as “the abstract concepts of what is right, worthwhile, or desirable; principles or standards.” Ask questions about the business’s philosophies and goals (businesses should have both financial

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 1–4 Career Opportunities</th>
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<td><strong>Medical Office</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Spas</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Resorts</strong></td>
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and nonfinancial goals). Specifically ask about client care philosophies; then discuss those values with which you can identify. Important values to you may include being on time, following company protocol, the quality of client care, or even volunteering at the local women’s shelter. Think twice about taking a position where your values differ from those of the spa or employer.

Under the subject of your value, you will want to itemize specifics such as the location of your primary education. Some schools have more prestige than others; build on this if it is possible. Include a list of advanced education, including college (name, location, and degree), and any advanced aesthetic education classes (with whom and where). Finally, include experience in the field in which you are looking to be employed.

*Integrity* is different from *values*. Integrity is defined as “uncompromising adherence to moral and ethical principles; honesty.” In this category you will want to ask questions about client care, such as how complications are handled, how unhappy clients are dealt with, and how fee disputes are managed. In addition, ask direct questions about the ethical principles of the company. There should be a written philosophy. Usually it is in the mission statement. Then consider if these ethical principles are similar or the same as your own—they should be.

Your skills are important to an employer, but sometimes the position is not exactly what you are looking for. You may be underqualified or overqualified. You need to assess this with the employer. Ask questions about the specific skills needed, and respond with information about your skills. If you are underqualified but otherwise a match, what training will be available to help you become qualified? How quickly will that happen and who will do the training? Will there be a pay raise once the training is complete? These are important questions to ask before committing to a position. What you hear at the interview and what happens in a job is not always the same thing. It is in your best interest to put into writing some of what would otherwise be a “handshake” deal. This approach eliminates any future misunderstandings or hard feelings. If the employer is unwilling to do this, maybe it is not a match.

Your needs are especially important, but they are not exclusive of the employer’s needs. The best situation is when you find a *need match*. List your needs, such as salary (pay rate, pay schedule, and commission), benefits, vacation time, sick day policies, hours to be worked, desired job description, and any other important needs you may have. Before the interview, decide which ones you can compromise on and which ones will be deal-breakers. Making this decision in advance prevents you from “giving in” on certain points during the interview, only to regret it later.

Once you have your credentials, your résumé, and your marketing plan, you are ready to go get the job for which you are uniquely qualified.
Medical Offices

Busy aesthetic medical offices are always looking for proficient aestheticians and cosmetic nurses. Often, a physician will be looking for an employee who can multitask and take on additional job responsibilities. Depending on the scope of the practice, you may have an opportunity that will allow you to learn more and expand your skills. Some medical offices are willing to train untrained aestheticians or cosmetic nurses. However, the market is very competitive, and soon those who hold advanced education certificates will become the employees of choice. So what are the advantages and disadvantages of working in a medical office?

Working in a medical office has many rewards, among them prestige, advanced knowledge, complex treatments, and the chance to work with other medical professionals. Medical professionals are unlike other professionals because their training has spanned life and death, and their commitment to their clients is extremely strong. The ability to make a difference in the lives of clients is both meaningful and rewarding, as is the chance to learn and become more skilled at your chosen profession. Working in a medical office requires expert skills, willingness to learn, compassion, understanding, and expert professionalism; the payoffs are unlike those of any other profession.

The downside to working in a medical office includes dealing with office politics (although all offices seem to have politics), being “low man on the totem pole” (the aesthetician or cosmetic nurse sometimes feels out of the loop and unimportant), adhering to many new rules that have little or no apparent meaning, learning a new business sector, and building the nonsurgical aesthetic business in isolation. Physicians, nurses, and clients do not tolerate mistakes; therefore, a medical office can be an intense and intimidating place in which to work. In addition, physicians are often busy doing surgery or seeing clients and do not have time to dedicate to the growth and development of the aesthetic arm of a business, even though it is important to them. This means they will be looking to the aesthetician or cosmetic nurse to do this. Understanding all of the potential pitfalls of building a nonsurgical aesthetic business will be important in this situation. If you learn how to maneuver through the rough spots, you will find this a rewarding and financial profitable career.

Salons and Spas

Salons and spas offer a sense of well-being and luxury to the client. As treatments have become more sophisticated and our tools have become
more advanced, we have the opportunity to provide our clients with treatments that may supplement medical treatments (lymphatic drainage) or help to reduce stress (reflexology). As the medical spa has become more popular and more aestheticians have the desire to work in the medical spa, other types of spas are looking for qualified and valuable employees (Figure 1–6). Many different types of spas exist; among them are salon spas, resort spas, cruise ship spas, day spas, club spas, destination spas, and holistic or mineral bath spas (Figures 1–7 and 1–8). Each spa has a different focus and requires the aesthetician to understand the advanced treatments he or she will be providing. Especially popular in resort spas and destination spas are body treatments and nutritional counseling. Cruise ship spas are looking for employees with excellent customer-service skills and great technical skills.

Spa directors expect their employees to be professional, educated, and willing to work hard to build their clientele. Having some experience or education in marketing will give you an opportunity to excel and build your clientele more quickly. Like the medical spa, it is important for the aesthetician to acquire advanced education and refine his or her techniques to be successful in the specific spa in which he or she happens to have interest.

**Figure 1–6** Microdermabrasion treatments are technique sensitive. Proper training should always take place before treating patients.

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**lymphatic drainage**
Drainage of lymphatic fluids.

**reflexology**
System of massage in which certain body parts are massaged in specific areas to favorably influence other body functions.

**The aesthetician must be properly licensed by the state in which he or she plans to work.**
LICENSE AND INSURANCE

Whether you are an aesthetician, nurse, physician’s assistant, or medical assistant, you should be licensed in the state in which you work. Confirmation of licensure should be provided to the employer and kept in the employee record. Many aestheticians like to keep their licenses hanging in their treatment rooms for all to see. In some states, this is a requirement. Unlicensed aestheticians should not be working in a medical setting (or at all, for that matter), and the license should be obtained before employment.

Several types of insurance are necessary for a spa business. For the aesthetician, the most important insurance policy will be the malpractice policy. This is the insurance policy that covers your actions when treating clients. If something goes wrong, this is the policy that will protect you. When working in the medical office, sometimes the physician will have a broad policy under which you will be covered. This is also true in the luxury spa. For you, as the individual aesthetician, getting proper coverage is a fact-finding mission. First, speak with your employer and find out what the status of coverage will be for your position. Second, find a reputable company and have a
consultation with one of the agents. Take his or her counsel and then consider a discussion with an attorney to ensure your best interests are evaluated.

**Liability Issues**

Liability issues for the aesthetician are an important factor in preparing for a career. In the U.S., people are more litigious than ever before. If something goes wrong, the client is always looking for someone to blame, and a lawyer is always available to take the case. Whether a case ever comes to settlement or trial, the stress of being blamed will be unbelievable; it is a situation in which no aesthetician should be caught.

Many potential liability risks exist for aestheticians. The most common occurrences that place the aesthetician at risk for lawsuits are scars, burns, product reactions and allergic reactions, infections, and failure to keep information confidential. When speaking specifically of microdermabrasion, the greatest risk of liability is corneal abrasion.

Scarring is an obvious concern, especially in the medical spa. No one is exempt from causing a scar; even improperly done extractions can cause scarring. Although medical aestheticians are more at risk, all aestheticians should be aware that any day they work they could cause a scar.

*Figure 1–8* Traditional spas offer nonmedicinal treatments in a professional and aesthetically pleasing environment. They may also be more luxurious and have a retail focus. (Photograph courtesy of Edit EuroSpa, Denver, Colorado.)
With aggressive tools (such as peel solutions or microdermabrasion) the aesthetician needs to follow protocol carefully and ensure that he or she is skilled in the treatments being provided. Burns are usually caused by paraffin, peel solutions, and improperly used equipment. Product reactions and allergic responses are also a worry, especially if the response is extensive. Further, it can be considered negligence if the client told you in advance of allergies but the information was lost or disregarded. Product allergies can leave significant erythema and may require an emergency room visit if severe.

Infection may be a result of an aesthetician’s failure to provide an adequate standard of care. Infections can happen in a variety of ways: failure to properly clean and sterilize implements, including extractors, microdermabrasion tips, brushes, electrodes, tweezers, bowls, reusable masks, or anything that touches the skin; failure to wear gloves during treatments (including spa treatments); or a lack of understanding about the sterilization and contamination process. The transmission of hepatitis C, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which is the cause of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), and herpes simplex (HSV) should all be of great concern to the aesthetician.

Failure to keep confidential client information is a subject for clients and the public. Talking about a client by name in front of another client, leaving charts or records on counters or desks where clients have access, leaving charge tickets with names where others can see, or having a signed guestbook at the front desk are all examples of a failure to keep information confidential. In the medical setting a federal regulation exists that all offices and medical professionals must follow; it is called the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). No federal regulations exist for spas, but a standard of ethics and professionalism directs spa and salon employees to keep clients’ information confidential.

Aside from the potential for scars mentioned previously, microdermabrasion has a risk for corneal abrasion. This can happen in two ways: (1) the goggles are not properly fitted to protect the eyes from crystals during treatment, or (2) crystals are swept into the eyes after the treatment. When a corneal abrasion occurs, an emergency room visit is usually necessary, followed by the care of an ophthalmologist. Of course, this visit puts the aesthetician at risk; therefore, great care must be taken by the aesthetician to protect the client’s eyes.

**REGULATORY AGENCIES**

The agencies that regulate the licenses of aestheticians are not federalized, and laws vary from state to state. Therefore, it will be important
for you to check with the licensing agency in your state to determine if, aside from general licensure, any specific requirements exist for your job. For example, you might need a certificate indicating that you have completed a course on microdermabrasion to perform the treatment.

**PROFESSIONAL CODE OF ETHICS**

The first question to ask is “Why have a code of ethics?” Two types of ethical codes exist: (1) personal ethics and (2) professional ethics. Although they may overlap, each document is important. Individually, the code of ethics is a very personal document that discusses how you will live your life and what your priorities are in daily decision making.

Creating a code of ethics is not an easy task. In the absence of a national code of ethics for medical aestheticians, cosmetic nurses, and physicians’ assistants, creating one in your workplace is imperative. For a code of ethics to be meaningful, the group that is going to use the document must develop it. It may feel like an overwhelming task because the subject matter can be broad and diverse, especially if the group writing the code is large. The focus of the code should be based on moral principles, and the group writing it should begin by asking certain questions: “Why a code of ethics?” “What is the purpose of our organization?” “For what will this code be used?”

For the code to be useful, it must reflect the qualities of the group (Table 1–5). This can be difficult, because each person within the group

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**Table 1–5 Writing a Professional Code of Ethics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preamble</td>
<td>What is the purpose of the organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of intent</td>
<td>What is the purpose of the code itself?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamental principles</td>
<td>What population is affected by your organization?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What is your organization’s area of expertise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamental rules</td>
<td>What unethical situations does your organization want to prevent?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the likely problem situations in which unethical solutions might arise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines for the fundamental principles and fundamental rules</td>
<td>How can these unethical situations be prevented? How can you prevent conflicting principles?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
has different qualities and moral viewpoints. However, finding a place of compromise is always the best option. The code of ethics must be broad enough to take into consideration the number of people using it but specific enough to direct behavior. If the code fails to provide substantive guidance for the organization, it creates confusion. As for the skin care industry at large and your business specifically, a few tips can be offered (see Table 1–5).

**Higher Standard of Professionalism**

When you work in the medical office, more is expected of you by both the client and the physician. You are expected to adhere to a higher level of professionalism and customer service than is familiar to you in the spa setting. You must train yourself to refrain from laughing, joking, and loud behavior. Clients may think you are talking or laughing about them. In addition, that kind of “party” atmosphere does not reflect positively on your image or your profession. In fact, it could negatively reflect on you in the eyes of the client. Your ethical conduct should be present in your contact with clients, their charts or records, and your communication with others about the client. The information you pass along about the client to colleagues or others involved in their care should be complete but comply with the HIPAA regulations (see following). The client list of the medical spa belongs to the physician and, according to the laws of HIPAA, the information should never leave the medical office.

**Professionalism in the Medical Setting**

As a professional you must commit to the aesthetics industry, your career, and your clients by behaving in the most upright manner. Your behavior is evaluated each day by your clients, your colleagues, and your physicians. Adhere to the written code of ethics in your office, and take the time to create your own individual code. This will help you through the rough decisions you may have to make on your own or in coordination with your manager. Just as important, try to find a mentor inside your office, and create a relationship of trust and learning. A mentor is a “wise and trusted counselor or teacher.”8 This person will help you to learn, and you can model your behavior and professionalism after him or her.

Finally, a word on ethics and clients. Although it may feel like the client you meet and treat belongs to you, the reality is that this client belongs to the medical spa and physician. Without the physician’s license you would be unable to extend your services. Therefore, if and when you leave the employ of the spa, it is inappropriate and unethical
### Proper Handling of Medical Information

**Access to Medical Records**—Clients are entitled to have copies of their records and to look at their medical records.

**Notice of Privacy Practices**—Medical facilities are required to communicate with clients in writing about how their medical information will be used and what their rights are under the law.

**Limits on the Use of Personal Medical Information**—This section of the law deals with insurance plans and how the client’s information is communicated between insurance companies and medical professionals.

**Prohibition on Marketing**—Restrictions exist concerning how client information can be used for marketing purposes.

**Stronger State Laws**—The national law does not affect stricter state laws. However, all states must abide by the national law.

**Confidential Communications**—Clients can dictate where and how they are contacted.

**Complaints**—All clients may file a complaint if they feel their privacy has been violated.

Here are a few basic tips that will help you to avoid trouble with HIPAA:

- Do not talk about clients within earshot of other clients (especially at the front desk and near or in the waiting area).
- Do not share information about the client with others, including the client’s family.
- Do not fax medical records.
- Do not gossip about clients.
- Do not leave charge tickets where other clients can see names.
- Do not make a computer screen available for the client to see.
- Do not release information over the phone.
- Do not release copied information without a signed release by the client.
- Take only the record for the client you are treating into the treatment room.
- Chart immediately and file the chart; do not leave charts lying about.
- Be an ethical professional and consider how you would like to be treated.

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to take a list of client names and phone numbers to contact for your next job. This is poor judgment, and if you are a medical professional (RN, physician’s assistant), your professional license may be at risk. This behavior will not gain you points in the medical and professional community. If the physician you are going to work for asks you to do this, you should be concerned. All you have is your reputation. You may some day require the referral of your current manager or physician or need to work with them on some professional level, such as on a committee. Do not embarrass yourself by doing something inappropriate or, worse yet, illegal.
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996

When working in a medical office, it is important for the aesthetician to understand all of the laws and regulations that affect the practice. Among these rules and laws is HIPAA. Passed by Congress in 1996 and signed into law in January of 1997, the purpose of this law is to protect the privacy of clients' health information. Uniform standards regulate how health information changes hands. This information is protected by stringent rules that apply to information in the chart, on the computer or fax, and by spoken word. Seven categories of the law exist with which you should concern yourself: (1) access to medical records, (2) notice of privacy practices, (3) limits on use of personal medical information, (4) prohibition on marketing, (5) stronger state laws, (6) confidential communications, and (7) complaints.

Professionalism in the Spa Setting

Because many laws exist that regulate the medical setting, focus should be more on the behavior required there than in the spa setting. However, the same level of professionalism is required at the spa, and codes of ethics and codes of conduct are vitally important there. To say simply that good customer service and the golden rule are adequate is a failure to appreciate the magnitude of these principles.

CONCLUSION

Career opportunities abound for the trained and focused aesthetician. Options exist beyond working in the regular day spa, and it is up to the aesthetician to evaluate the opportunities and act on them. Recognizing the importance of HIPAA, ethics, and professionalism will ensure that you are well-respected within the spa. Continuing to manage your career after graduation by taking continuing education courses will allow you to maintain and expand your skills while increasing your success as an aesthetician.

Top 10 Tips to Take to the Spa

1. Baby Boomers were the driving force behind aesthetic skin care; however, now your client population will be of all ages.

2. The origins of microdermabrasion are found in traditional dermabrasion; however, microdermabrasion is far more superficial and nonabrasive.
3. Three different kinds of microdermabrasion crystals are used: aluminum oxide, salt crystals, and diamond-encrusted tips. All work in basically the same fashion, by polishing the skin.

4. Microdermabrasion is in a class by itself. Although it is compared with light peels and laser treatments, no other medical spa treatment provides the same level of exfoliation and improvement in the skin’s tone and texture.

5. Microdermabrasion is a technique-sensitive procedure; repetitive practice is necessary to achieve a predictable result. Practice as much as you can.

6. Continue your education through courses at conferences and programs that are available through manufacturers and colleges.

7. Be aware of the potential liability issues when treating a microdermabrasion client.

8. Be professional.


10. Keep your client information confidential.

**Chapter Review Questions**

1. What is nonsurgical aesthetic skin care? List three reasons why it might be preferred over more invasive types of skin care?

2. What is microdermabrasion, and why does it qualify as a nonsurgical aesthetic skin care treatment?

3. Why does microdermabrasion have such mass appeal?

4. Choose one step in the evolution of skin care. Explain why you think they might have significance to the field of aesthetics.

5. How are dermabrasion and microdermabrasion different from one another?

6. How might newer “closed system” machines be preferential to the older “open system” machines?

7. Explain the term corundum. Go into depth about the materials used as corundum and their pros and cons.

8. What three factors affect treatment depth in microdermabrasion?

9. True or false: Microdermabrasion can loosen and remove the debris of older and dead skin, allowing room for newer and more vital skin cells to reveal themselves.
10. True or false: Microdermabrasion improves only the epidermis, but does not affect the dermis.

11. True or false: It is not recommended to use microdermabrasion in conjunction with other treatments.

12. Define the term *technique-sensitive* in the context of microdermabrasion.

13. Which is more important, employer training or vendor training of microdermabrasion? What are the benefits of each? The negatives?

14. What components of classroom training would benefit an aesthetician? Why?

15. Explain the training protocols for microdermabrasion. What are they, and how would a student of microdermabrasion benefit from them?

16. How does ongoing or continued education benefit a student of microdermabrasion?

17. From where you are now, write about the aesthetic sector in which you imagine yourself. What are you doing to enable that to happen?

18. List some of your personal values as they might apply to your future as an aesthetician.

19. What are the liability issues associated with performing microdermabrasion? How can these issues be prevented?

20. What is the regulatory body in the state in which you intend to practice microdermabrasion?

21. Write your own code of ethics.

22. Would you consider working in a medical environment? What might the benefits of doing so?

23. Explain HIPAA. Why might that apply to aesthetics?

24. Why might you benefit from membership in a professional organization?

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**Chapter References**


