ADDRESSING AESTHETICS

TEXAS LASER INSTITUTE'S MED SPA QUARTERLY

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MUST-TRY TREATMENTS
NEXT-GEN SKINCARE

WINTER EDITION
VOLUME TWO

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CONTENTS

Candice Morrison,
School Director - Irving Campus, LE

Instructor's Corner

As an Aesthetics Educator and Director of Admissions for our Dallas location, I see firsthand how driven today's aestheticians are to elevate their education in order to deliver measurable, results-driven outcomes. Cooler weather brings reduced humidity, impaired barrier function, and slower cellular turnover, but it also creates an ideal clinical window for more advanced interventions. Winter is not the time to simplify care, but rather it is the time to refine it, moving beyond surface-level solutions and leaning into ingredients, protocols, and
treatments that work more intentionally with skin physiology.

That philosophy is reflected throughout this issue, from med spa growth strategies and seasonally adjusted treatment protocols to in-depth features on pigment science, tranexamic acid, and regenerative technologies. As advanced actives such as peptides, growth factors, exosomes, and PDRN become more accessible, the responsibility to use them correctly becomes essential. This is why we continue to emphasize advanced education, including our Exosomes & Advanced Ingredients Certification Course, designed to help practitioners confidently integrate next-generation ingredients into winter-appropriate protocols.
The cooler months demand more than heavier moisturizers, they call for informed,

Closing the Year Strong and Planning for Growth

As the New Year gets underway, med spa owners are well positioned to convert seasonal demand into sustained growth. Rather than treating the holidays as a short-term revenue spike, this period offers an opportunity to assess performance, refine strategy, and implement systems that support predictable, year-round profitability. Early Q1 is a natural inflection point to strengthen financial levers, optimize operations, and lay the groundwork for scalable growth.

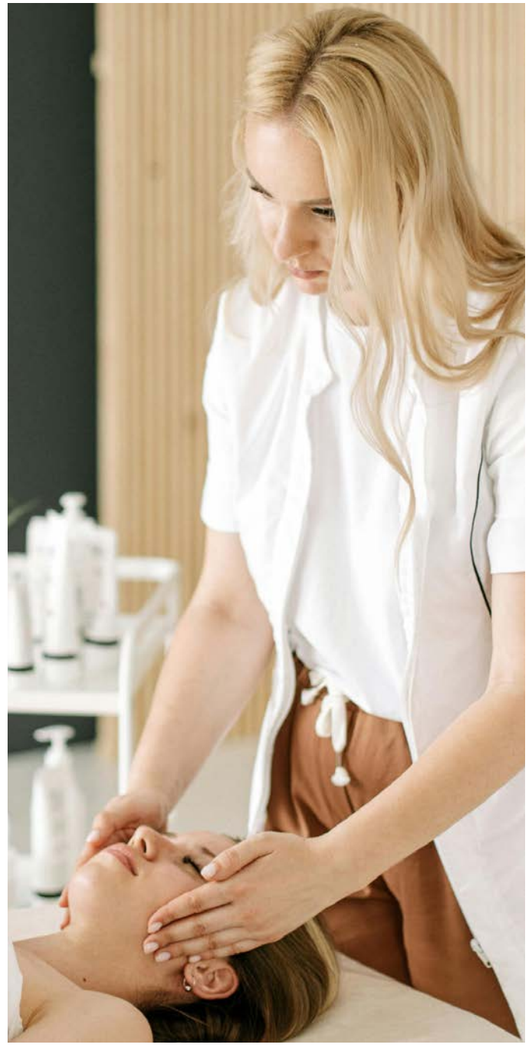
A strong starting point is a comprehensive pricing review. Year-end performance data provides clear visibility into which services are driving margins, contributing to profitability, and which are underperforming or creating operational strain. A thorough pricing audit should account for the full cost of delivery, including consumables, provider time, room utilization, and device depreciation, while also factoring in local market positioning, competitive landscape, and current demand patterns.

When pricing adjustments are necessary, they should be paired with visible value enhancements such as refined treatment protocols, upgraded technology, expanded service inclusions, or enhanced post-care experiences. Clear, proactive communication, honoring pre-purchased pricing, and protecting preferred rates through memberships or prepaid packages are essential to preserving client trust and long-term loyalty.

Holiday gift cards often deliver a meaningful cash-flow boost at year-end, but their true value is realized in the weeks and months that follow. Redemptions should be intentionally positioned as consultative experiences that assess client goals and guide them toward memberships or customized treatment plans. Limited-time post-redemption incentives can encourage continuity of care and rebooking, while automated follow-ups, reminders, and redemption tracking ensure gift card recipients are consistently nurtured into long-term clients rather than remaining one-time visitors.

Membership programs are critical for stabilizing revenue early in the year and smoothing seasonal fluctuations. Q1 is an ideal time to evaluate existing offerings or introduce new tiers aligned with updated services, pricing, and evolving client needs. High-performing memberships emphasize perceived value without creating operational strain, offering benefits such as priority booking, exclusive pricing, complimentary consultations, bundled services, and loyalty rewards. Membership pricing should support both profitability and retention, avoiding steep discounts that erode margins, devalue services, or disrupt long-term momentum.

These initiatives should be guided by a focused and disciplined review of year-end performance metrics. Key KPIs include monthly recurring revenue, gift card sales and redemption rates, client retention and rebooking, average revenue per client, provider and room utilization, retail attachment, and cost per acquisition.



The Med Spa Team's New Year Planning Checklist

1. Review and Adjust Pricing
Audit pricing against costs, provider time, and competitors. Identify underpriced and premium services, link increases to clear value upgrades, announce changes in advance, and protect loyal clients through memberships or prepaid packages.

2. Optimize Bundles and Packages
Build outcome-driven bundles anchored by high-margin services. Position bundles around results rather than procedures, and align them with gift card usage.

3. Maximize Gift Card Impact
Track gift card sales and redemption timing. Use redemption visits to convert clients into memberships, incentivize first-time users, and automate follow-ups to drive repeat visits.

4. Evaluate and Refine Membership Programs
Simplify membership tiers for margin and perceived value. Add low-effort benefits such as priority booking or consult credits, update pricing to reflect service value, and plan membership conversion c ampaigns.

5. Analyze KPIs and Financial Performance
Monitor MRR, retention, ARPC, utilization, CPA, retail attachment, and gift card performance. Compare year-over-year trends, forecast slow periods, and maintain monthly and quarterly scorecards.

6. Plan Campaigns and Promotions
Launch limited-time bundles and gift card incentives. Use outcome-focused messaging, set clear redemption deadlines, and automate email and SMS nurture sequences.

7. Align Team and Operations
Train staff on pricing, bundles, and memberships. Provide consult and upsell scripts, and ensure scheduling, inventory, and tracking systems can support demand.

Winter Skin Physiology and Optimizing Treatment Protocols

Seasonal shifts require more than marketing adjustments. They demand changes in clinical reasoning and treatment design. Winter conditions significantly alter skin physiology, making protocol modification essential for safety, results, and client satisfaction.

Prioritizing Barrier Repair as the Foundation

Barrier integrity should be assessed before every winter treatment and treated as the clinical baseline. Effective barrier support includes ceramides, cholesterol, and fatty acids in an ideal 3:1:1 ratio, multi-weight hyaluronic acid, emollients such as squalane or jojoba oil, and niacinamide at 2–5% to support repair and reduce sensitivity. Protocols should be modified immediately if micro-tears or compromised barrier function are present.

Leveraging the Low-UV Window for Advanced Treatments

Winter is the optimal season for treatments with photosensitivity risk, including medium-depth chemical peels, fractional non-ablative laser treatments, microneedling with growth factors, and IPL for pigmentation or vascular concerns. Post-treatment care should emphasize occlusive support for 24 to 72 hours to restore barrier integrity and minimize complications.

Modifying Exfoliation

Exfoliation during winter requires a more conservative approach. Frequency of AHAs and BHAs should be reduced, with lactic acid favored over glycolic acid for dehydrated or sensitive skin.

Enzyme exfoliation can serve as a gentler alternative, and hydration status should always be assessed before recommending exfoliants.

Expanding Hydration Focused Treatments

Winter is an ideal time to emphasize hydration-driven services that support repair and reduce inflammation.

Appropriate options include hydrating oxygen facials, aqua facials on sensitive settings, red and near-infrared LED therapy, hyaluronic acid infusion therapies, and nano-infusion for dehydrated or barrier-impaired skin.

Adjusting Pre- and Post-Treatment Protocols

Pre-treatment protocols should include reducing retinoid use at least one week prior to peels or laser treatments and reviewing acne medications that may exacerbate dryness. Post-treatment care should avoid exfoliation for a minimum of one week, emphasize occlusive layering, discourage prolonged hot showers, and minimize abrupt temperature changes immediately following treatment.

"Seasonally informed protocols for safer treatments and superior skin outcomes."

Conditions Commonly Exacerbated in Winter

Treatment planning should account for seasonal flares. Rosacea often requires avoidance of heat-based treatments during active phases, eczema or dermatitis demands a barrier-first approach, dryness-driven acne benefits from reduced stripping and inflammation control, and seasonal dullness responds best to hydration and mild brightening strategies.

Protocols should remain flexible, with reassessment at each visit to adjust intensity, modality, and product selection as skin tolerance shifts. Patient education on seasonal triggers and at-home maintenance is essential to sustain results and prevent exacerbations between treatments.

Clinical Takeaway

Winter presents both increased risk and expanded opportunity. When protocols are adapted to seasonal skin physiology, medical estheticians can safely perform more advanced treatments, improve clinical outcomes, reduce complication rates, and maintain client trust and satisfaction.

This strategic alignment allows practitioners to balance corrective interventions with barrier support, maximizing efficacy while minimizing seasonal stress on the skin.

Tixel²: Precision Thermal Rejuvenation for Every Skin Type

Tixel is a fractional skin rejuvenation system that uses a heated titanium tip to deliver controlled thermal energy. This creates microscopic zones that stimulate collagen and elastin, while forming micro-channels to enhance topical absorption.

These channels allow targeted serums and regenerative ingredients to penetrate more effectively, maximizing post-treatment results and accelerating recovery. The technology is highly customizable, making it suitable for a wide range of skin types and concerns.

Unlike lasers or microneedling, Tixel relies on heat rather than radiation or puncture, offering precise, effective treatment with minimal downtime. It improves fine lines, wrinkles, texture, tone, acne and other scars, pigmentation, enlarged pores, and lax or crepey skin—even in delicate areas like around the eyes.

Haley Carter is a Medical Aesthetician, Laser Technician, CoolSculpting Master, and Body Contouring Specialist with over 12 years of experience in medical aesthetics. She has spent more than six years at About Face and Body, training under Michelle Osbourne-Spencer, PA, a respected provider with over 25 years in aesthetic medicine.

Haley specializes in advanced treatments including DiamondGlow, chemical peels, BBL/Moxi, Tixel², SkinPen, Pixel resurfacing, laser hair and tattoo removal, CoolSculpting, and CoolTone. She stays current through ongoing education and advanced training.

Known for her calm, compassionate approach, Haley builds genuine relationships with her clients, creating a supportive space that enhances natural beauty and restores confidence.

Find her on Instagram: @haleymae

What treatment intervals and series do you typically recommend for optimal results?

A standard protocol includes three treatments spaced four to six weeks apart. Depending on the patient's concerns and goals, maintenance treatments once or twice per year can help sustain collagen production and overall skin quality.

Are there ingredients or post-Tixel² actives you avoid, and why?

Immediately post-treatment, I avoid strong exfoliating acids, retinoids, and other potentially irritating actives to protect the skin barrier and minimize inflammation during the initial healing phase. At this stage, the skin is more permeable and sensitive, so supporting recovery is critical for optimal results.

Instead, I focus on soothing, hydrating, and regenerative ingredients. Recently, we've incorporated Invo Exosomes and tranexamic acid post-treatment with excellent patient response. They accelerate healing, calm inflammation, and enhance Tixel²'s regenerative effects by supporting cellular communication and recovery.

How does Tixel² align with current industry shifts toward regenerative aesthetics and combination therapy?

Tixel² aligns seamlessly with regenerative aesthetics by stimulating the body's natural repair processes while enhancing delivery of biologically active ingredients. It pairs exceptionally well with growth factors, PRP, exosomes, and medical-grade topicals, making it a cornerstone of combination therapy protocols.

Where do you see Tixel² fitting within the broader evolution of non-ablative and minimally invasive treatments?

Tixel² reflects the direction of modern aesthetics: highly customizable, minimally invasive treatments that deliver meaningful results with reduced risk and downtime. It bridges the gap between light resurfacing procedures and more aggressive interventions.

If you had to justify Tixel² to another seasoned provider in one sentence, what would you say?

Tixel² delivers precise, needle-free, non-radiative skin regeneration that can be safely customized for all skin types and delicate areas, making it one of the most versatile technologies in modern aesthetics.

Clinical Takeaway

With its precision, versatility, and minimal downtime, Tixel² exemplifies the next generation of skin rejuvenation—offering safe, effective results for a wide range of concerns and skin types.

Under the expert care of professionals like Haley Carter, patients can experience the benefits of advanced regenerative aesthetics while feeling supported and confident throughout their journey.

Whether addressing fine lines, pigmentation, scarring, or overall skin texture, Tixel² provides a customizable, evidence-based approach that enhances natural beauty and restores confidence, making it a standout tool in today's evolving aesthetic landscape.

Tranexamic Acid

In Dermatology and Medical Esthetics

Tranexamic acid (TXA) is a synthetic derivative of the amino acid lysine. Although it has long been used in medicine as an antifibrinolytic agent to control bleeding, its relevance in dermatology and medical esthetics lies in a very different mechanism of action.

In skincare, TXA is recognized as a well-supported ingredient for the management of hyperpigmentation. It is commonly used in the treatment of melasma, post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (PIH), and uneven skin tone. Unlike traditional bleaching agents, TXA improves pigmentation without damaging melanocytes or stripping the skin of its natural protective functions.

TXA does not remove pigment that already exists in the skin. Instead, it works by reducing the signaling pathways that cause excess pigment to be produced and unevenly distributed. For this reason, it is often described in dermatologic literature as an "upstream" pigment regulator, targeting the triggers of melanocyte stimulation rather than melanin itself.

Advantages of Tranexamic Acid

TXA has become widely adopted due to its balance of efficacy and safety. It is suitable for sensitive and reactive skin, does not rely on hydroquinone, and does not destroy melanocytes or bleach the skin.

The risk of rebound hyperpigmentation is low, and TXA is compatible with most active ingredients, making it appropriate for year-round use.

Integrating TXA Into Esthetic Treatment Plans

Pre-treatment conditioning: Using topical TXA for two to four weeks prior to peels, lasers, or microneedling helps stabilize melanocyte activity and reduce the risk of post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation.

Use during professional treatments: TXA is safe for topical application following microneedling and is commonly used after exfoliation or mild chemical peels. It integrates well into protocols that include vitamin C and niacinamide.

Post-treatment support: TXA is typically continued for four to twelve weeks after procedures to prevent pigment rebound and support even healing, particularly following aggressive resurfacing treatments.

Safety Profile

Topical tranexamic acid is considered low risk and well tolerated. Mild irritation, temporary dryness, or rare sensitivity reactions may occur and are usually managed by adjusting frequency and reinforcing barrier repair.

Educational Takeaway

Tranexamic acid represents a modern, evidence-based approach to pigment management. By addressing inflammatory and signaling pathways rather than directly targeting melanin, TXA offers estheticians a reliable, gentle, and clinically supported option for treating melasma and post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation across a wide range of skin types.

Its ability to reduce vascular and inflammatory triggers makes it especially valuable for managing stubborn, recurrent pigmentation without increasing skin sensitivity or risk.

Melanogenesis: Pigment Pathways in Esthetic Practice

Hyperpigmentation is one of the most common and challenging concerns in esthetic practice. Successful treatment depends not only on product selection, but on understanding why pigment is forming, which pathways are involved, and how different ingredients intervene at the biochemical level.

Melanogenesis is the biological process through which melanocytes produce melanin. It occurs within specialized organelles called melanosomes and is regulated by a network of enzymes, receptors, and signaling molecules activated by environmental and internal stressors.

Melanin serves several essential protective functions in the skin, including shielding against ultraviolet radiation, neutralizing oxidative stress, and reducing DNA damage. However, in aesthetic medicine melanogenesis becomes problematic when the process is overstimulated or prolonged, leading to uneven tone and persistent hyperpigmentation.

This dysregulation may be triggered by UV exposure, inflammation, hormonal changes, and post-injury responses that amplify melanin production beyond the skin's normal protective needs.

Although the number of melanocytes is relatively consistent across all skin types, what differs is melanocyte activity, melanosome size, and melanosome distribution, which directly influence how pigment behaves and how skin responds to inflammation and treatment.

In Fitzpatrick types I through III, melanosomes tend to be smaller and degrade more quickly, with lower baseline tyrosinase activity and a reduced risk of post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation. These skin types generally recover faster from inflammation and are more tolerant of aggressive corrective treatments.

In Fitzpatrick types IV through VI, melanosomes are larger and more stable, degrade more slowly, and show higher tyrosinase responsiveness. These skin types also demonstrate increased inflammatory sensitivity, which explains the higher risk of PIH and rebound pigmentation. For this reason, inflammation control and conservative treatment progression are critical when working with higher Fitzpatrick types, as overly aggressive protocols often worsen pigmentation rather than improve it.

Tyrosinase: The Key Enzyme in Pigment Production

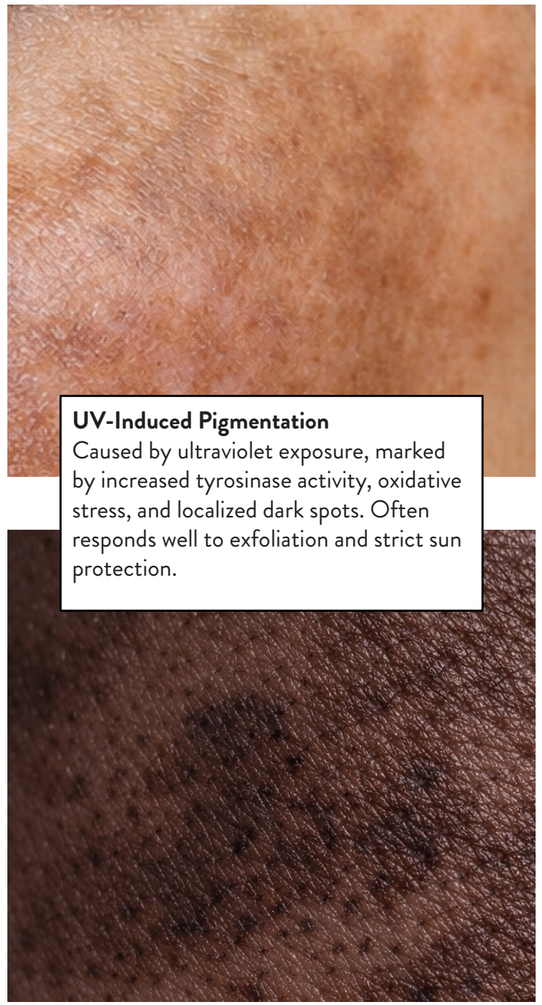
Tyrosinase is the rate-limiting enzyme in melanin synthesis, catalyzing the conversion of tyrosine to DOPA and then to dopaquinone, which ultimately leads to melanin formation. Increased tyrosinase activity directly results in increased melanin production. Its activity is stimulated by factors such as ultraviolet radiation, inflammatory mediators, hormonal signaling, and reactive oxygen species. Because of this central role, many skin-brightening agents are designed to inhibit tyrosinase either directly or indirectly, making it a primary target in the management of hyperpigmentation.

PAR-2 Receptors and Pigment Expression

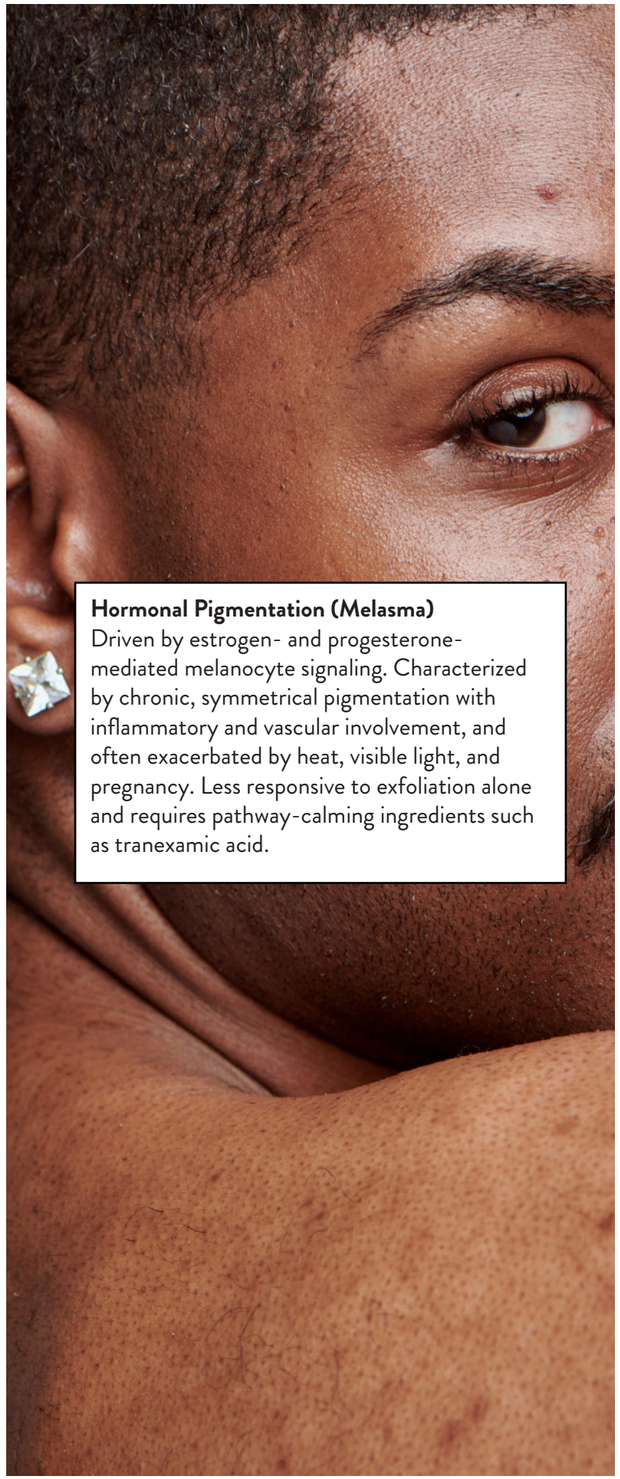
Protease-activated receptor-2 (PAR-2) is expressed on keratinocytes and plays a key role in melanosome uptake from melanocytes. When PAR-2 is activated, keratinocytes absorb melanosomes more efficiently, allowing pigment to disperse more widely throughout the epidermis and making hyperpigmentation more apparent. Conversely, reducing PAR-2 activity limits melanosome transfer and uptake, which can diminish the visible appearance of dark patches even when melanin synthesis continues.

Melanosome Transfer: Making Pigment Visible

Melanin synthesized within melanocytes is packaged into melanosomes and transferred to surrounding keratinocytes, where it determines visible skin color. The rate and pattern of this transfer strongly influence the intensity of pigmentation, the size and definition of dark patches, and the persistence of hyperpigmentation. While some interventions focus on reducing melanin production, others limit melanosome transfer; the most effective pigment management strategies typically address both processes simultaneously.



UV-Induced Pigmentation
Caused by ultraviolet exposure, marked by increased tyrosinase activity, oxidative stress, and localized dark spots. Often responds well to exfoliation and strict sun protection.



Hormonal Pigmentation (Melasma)
Driven by estrogen- and progesterone-mediated melanocyte signaling. Characterized by chronic, symmetrical pigmentation with inflammatory and vascular involvement, and often exacerbated by heat, visible light, and pregnancy. Less responsive to exfoliation alone and requires pathway-calming ingredients such as tranexamic acid.

How Pigment Modulators Work Biochemically

Tranexamic Acid (TXA)
Acts upstream by inhibiting plasmin, reducing inflammation and melanocyte overstimulation. Particularly effective for melasma and inflammation-driven PIH.

Azelaic Acid
Selectively inhibits overactive melanocytes while providing anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial benefits. Ideal for acne-related PIH and rosacea-prone skin.

Hydroquinone
Directly suppresses melanin production through strong tyrosinase inhibition. Highly effective but requires careful management due to irritation and rebound risk, especially in higher Fitzpatrick types.

Kojic Acid
Reduces melanin synthesis by chelating copper required for tyrosinase activity. Best used as a supportive pigment-correcting ingredient rather than a primary treatment.

Educational Takeaway

Melanogenesis is a complex, multi-step process influenced by genetics, inflammation, hormones, and environmental exposure. Understanding where each pigment-modulating ingredient acts allows estheticians to design safer, more effective treatment plans and to reduce the risk of PIH and pigment rebound.

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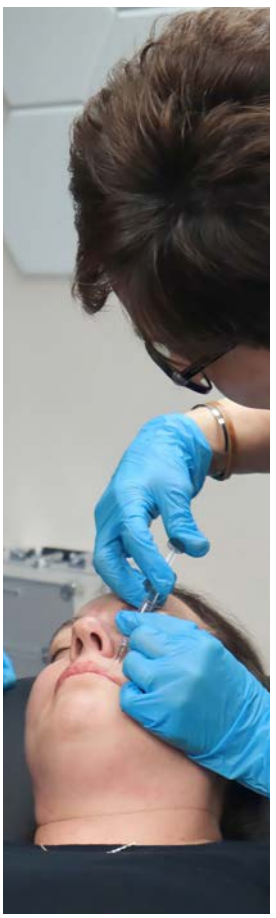

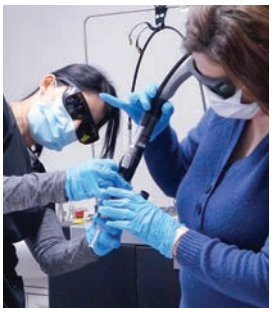

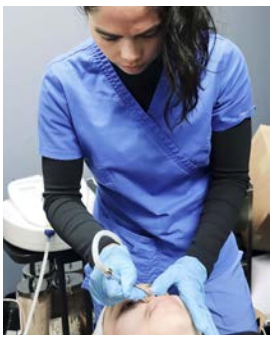

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