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Laser and IPL can offer serious profit potential far beyond hair removal. FIONA VLEMMIKS explores the capabilities of this versatile tech

The popularity of laser and IPL for hair removal has been steadily growing, but many salons and spas are now moving beyond the staple hair removal business to harness the full potential of these powerful machines.

Although laser comes with initial financial outlay, results are fast – both for the client and the salon. Existing senior therapists with a solid base of experience and training can be transformed into laser or IPL specialists, significantly increasing their earning potential and skillset.

For those who are yet to take the plunge, or are considering expanding their existing aesthetic services, laser or IPL can differentiate your treatment menu beyond the realms of hair removal – and provide a fast return on investment through aesthetic skin treatments that can improve the appearance of everything

from wrinkles, pigmentation and vascular lesions, to acne and fungal nail infections.

Skin rejuvenation

A viable alternative or accompaniment to injectables, laser skin rejuvenation stimulates, rejuvenates and tightens skin by promoting collagen and fibroblast activity deep within the skin cell structure, causing long-lasting results.

Moreover, with minimal discomfort and downtime, laser skin rejuvenation can be incorporated into existing facials to create a bespoke element, or as a standalone session.

Ian Hallam, company director and head of training and clinical support at Cosmedico, explains the benefits of skin rejuvenation: “Light energy is converted into heat. The energy this produces focuses on the deeper layers of the dermis, which contain the tear-proof collagen and elastin fibres.

The treatment stimulates

the skin cells to start producing skin-tautening collagen and elastin again. The result is healthy, young and fresh-looking skin.”

Hallam also highlights how the treatment can be marketed to clients of all budgets – suggesting you can charge £30 to £50 for a 15-minute express facial, and from £120 to £150 for an hour’s bespoke treatment.

Acne

Laser and IPL can also provide a competitive edge when it comes to assisting clients with problem skin. Chanele Rosa, clinical specialist at laser and IPL brand Ellipse, suggests using two wavelengths to treat active acne, depending on the severity.

“The wavelength of 530nm to 750nm can be used for active acne by targeting the porphyrins in the skin, helping to reduce future breakouts and overproduction of sebum.

“In our Photodynamic treatments, the wavelength of 400nm-720nm is used with a photo spray, further enhancing results,” she says. >



that plague many clients can be significantly reduced with laser treatments.

“Thread veins can be treated in a relatively short time scale – averaging two to four treatments – although this will depend on the types of vessels being treated,” explains Susan Forster, head of clinical training for the aesthetics division at ABC Lasers, which distributes the Alma Harmony XL Pro system suitable for treating vascular lesions, tattoo removal, pigmentation and skin remodelling, among its range of machines.

A course of treatments, roughly four per month, is typically recommended and is effective for those with paler skins (Fitzpatrick types one to four). However, client expectations must be managed. The therapy treats the symptoms of acne, rather than curing it, and clients taking any form of antibiotics or Roacutane to treat acne will be contraindicated.

Ellipse recommends charging £150 to £180 for IPL and from £250 for fractional laser to secure a profitable return on investment.

Pigmentation

“Many people suffer from premature ageing in their late-twenties and onwards in the form of uneven skin tone and abnormal hyperpigmentation, largely due to exposure to harmful UV rays and other lifestyle factors such as smoking,” says Dr Samantha Hills, clinical director at Lynton Lasers, which manufactures a wide range of laser and IPL machines.

“When it comes to treating pigmentation, success is generally greater on fairer skin types (Fitzpatrick type one to three) due to the greater risk of post-inflammatory hypo or hyper-pigmentation in darker skins.

While superficial pigmentation often only needs one treatment, pigmented birthmarks might need between three and six sessions to see good clearance, advises Hills.

“Some small, superficial pigmented lesions such as freckles and lentigines (age spots or sunspots) can also be thermally destroyed using a high-powered intense pulsed light system or a long-pulsed alexandrite laser,” she adds.

In terms of training, for the treatment of sun damage (including lentigines) Lynton recommends a Level 4 qualification such as the VTCT Laser and Light Qualification for Skin Rejuvenation.

However, correct diagnosis of the pigmented lesion is essential before any treatment, and any unusual lesions should always be biopsied and diagnosed by a dermatologist.

Thread veins

Although larger veins may require sclerotherapy, the smaller, unsightly thread or spider veins (vascular lesions)



The technology works by destroying blood vessels. “The process uses light to heat up the vessel in order to coagulate the blood to collapse the vessel, which the body will then eliminate over a period of a few days to a few weeks,” says Forster.

The treatment is only suitable for lighter skins. “Realistic expectations need to be set at the initial consultation,” continues Forster. “Due to the nature of the vascular system, the excellent results achieved may need to be maintained with further top-up treatments if new veins develop.”

Nonetheless, laser treatment for thread or spider veins can yield a quick and gratifying return. For an average full-face >

Clockwise from top left: Before and after one acne treatment at Laser of Barking using Ellipse, a Lynton IPL skin rejuvenation treatment



treatment taking 15–20 minutes, you can charge between £150 and £200 per session, says Forster. “With each client requiring on average two to four treatments there is clear opportunity for a quick return on investment.”

Milia and skin tags

Clients’ troublesome milia and skintags can also be treated with laser.

“The form of laser generally used is the Er:YAG, at a wavelength 2940nm. This non-ablative treatment selectively vapourises the epidermis, leaving the surrounding tissue outside the treatment zone undamaged,” says Sarah McNulty, head of training at Advanced Esthetics Solutions, which

distributes the multi-laser Superbium, among others.

“Another laser option for milia and unblocking pores is q-switched Nd:YAG, applied to carbon paste. This softens hard nodules trapped beneath dead skin cells, gently resurfacing, healing and improving the texture,” she adds.

The treatment requires little down time and the condition is best managed with suitable homecare – McNulty recommends an AHA cleanser, corrective serum, and vitamin A cream – providing retail opportunities for your business.

Fungal nail infections

Treatment for fungal nail infections has traditionally been a lengthy process, but laser offers a speedy alternative and a lucrative service for your salon.

“Onychomycosis has involved treatment with either topical nail varnish or oral tablets, or a combination, for periods of up to a year,” says Dr Andrew Weber, medical director and lead doctor at Bodyvie Medi-Clinic, which charges £175 per session. “With laser, just two to four treatments may be sufficient. Laser treatment is used in preference to IPL for the delivery of high energy of specific wavelengths.”

Bodyvie uses a 1064nm Nd:YAG laser, which passes heat into the nail bed, destroying the fungus by disrupting mitochondrial functioning.

“This laser allows high energy delivery in all skin types, as the absorption of melanin at this wavelength is minimal, meaning all types will get the same results,” says Weber, who adds that the best outcomes are usually seen on lighter skin types because higher energy settings can be applied.

Decision time

Like any buying decision, there are numerous variables to consider when investing in laser and IPL equipment.

Hills advises: “Look for a company with credentials that suit you. This could be as simple as the level of training they provide with their equipment, or perhaps the post-purchase support they can offer.”

While the financial outlay can be daunting, crunching the numbers will forecast future earnings. “Leasing prices for high-quality equipment are typically at an investment level of around £500 to £650 a month. As a rule of thumb, you can expect a laser or IPL device to generate around £200 per hour in revenue, so it evidently doesn’t take many hours of



treatment to cover these costs,” says Hills.

Any new investment carries some risk and a well-researched business plan is essential, but with laser and IPL, it also comes with great potential for growth. **PB**

Clockwise from top left: ABC Lasers’ Alma Harmony XL machine, a photorejuvenation treatment using the Superbium at Bodyvie