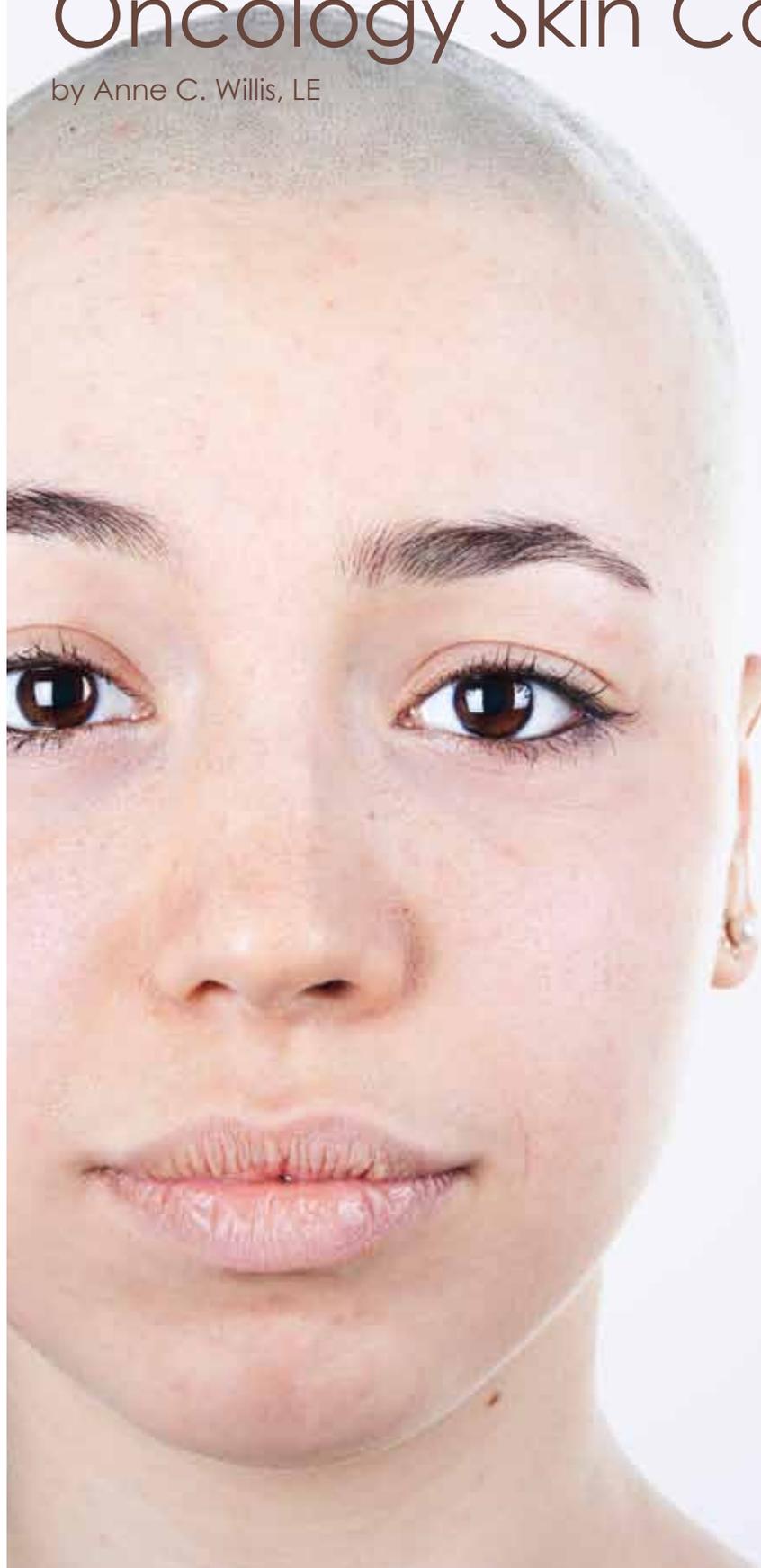


10 Things *About...*

Oncology Skin Care

by Anne C. Willis, LE



Forty-one percent of Americans will develop cancer. This means, with very few exceptions, every family will be touched by this disease. Chemotherapy drugs (in combination with radiation) are a crucial component to all cancer management; and with this rising cancer burden, doctors and patients alike will see an increasing incidence of chemotherapy-related skin toxicity. If significant skin reactions are not managed quickly, dose interruptions, reductions, or discontinuation of chemotherapy and/or radiation can occur, thus impacting clinical outcomes for the patient. Aestheticians may play a key role in a skin therapy treatment plan, however it is important to be familiar with underlying skin care principles to impact the care of oncology patients.

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1. The principles of oncology skin care describe what the public, the patient, and medical institutions can expect from an aesthetician that specializes in oncology skin treatments. They are intended as guidelines for good and ethical practices, which hold the care of the patient at the forefront.

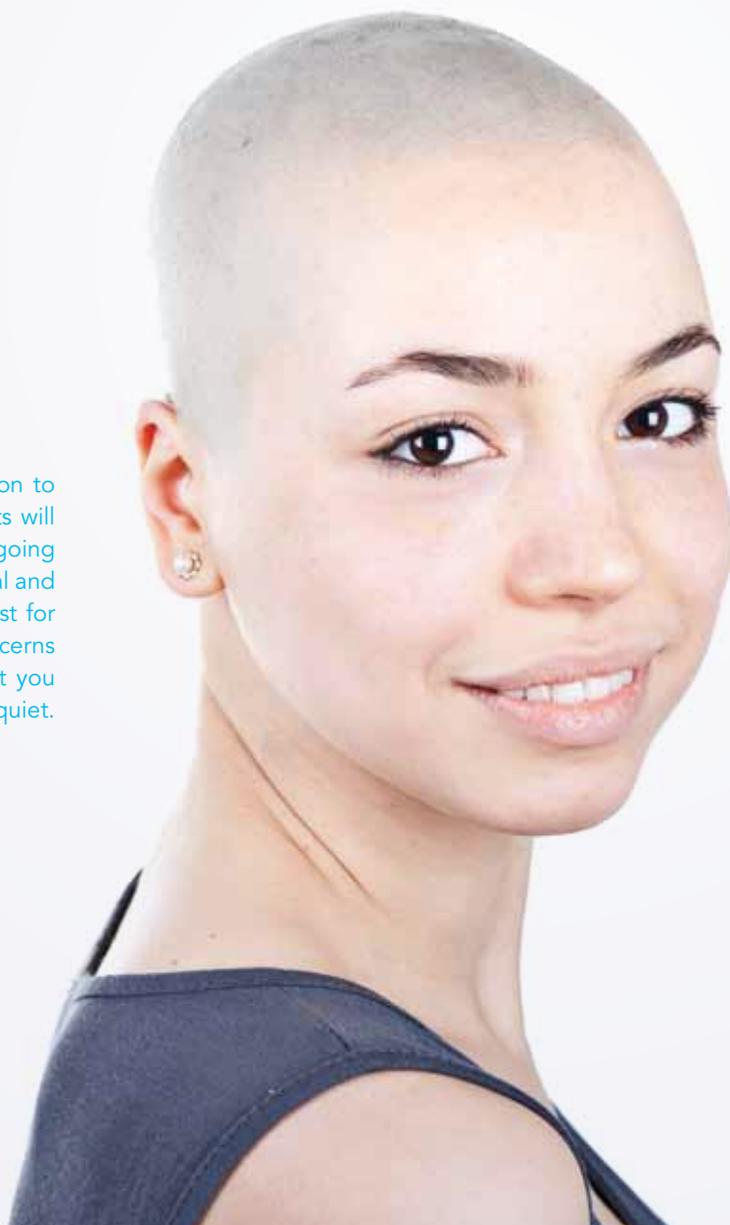
2. When a patient is diagnosed with cancer, they are thrown off balance and they lose control of many aspects of their lives. Giving patients a self-care program that allows them to be actively involved in their recovery will not only improve the health of their skin, but can also improve their quality of life and overall well-being.



3. Practitioners need to develop patience when working with this delicate population. Some patients will experience cognitive problems during their course of chemotherapy. This is due to the introduction of a non-organic supply of chemicals to the body. Compassion is key to supporting them, and therefore it may be necessary to take a grief-counseling course. Serving cancer patients can have an emotional impact on practitioners, so being prepared to handle their loss of control can help you to keep balanced.

4. Practitioners need to let go of the intention to fix the client in favor of just being. Patients will become very verbal about what they are going through, but we want to remain professional and focused on what we know best... Skin Support! It is best for them to quiet themselves and detach from all the concerns and worry of their medical treatments. The biggest gift you can give them is the opportunity to detach and become quiet.

5. Skin changes occur as medical oncology therapies and drugs begin to detoxify through the skin. Skin will become dry, thin, fragile, sensitive, inflamed, and may even breakout. The focus of any skin therapy treatment is to restore the skin's integrity so it can withstand this detoxifying process.





6. It is essential that practitioners are always aware of the level of demand the skin treatment has (both physical and psychological) on the client. You cannot perform a standard facial on an oncology patient. Their immune systems are depleted and their systems are saturated with a highly toxic drug, so overstimulation or activation could make them extremely fatigued or ill.

7. It is necessary to handle the body with great mindfulness. Patients hold on to a lot of anxiety. We want them to feel safe and secure in our hands, so they can release emotionally. Patients will experience isolation from others that may include a loss of physical touch. It is important to be mindful that the slightest touch or act of kindness may give them permission to release.



8. New methods for skin activation must be developed. When working on an individual who detoxifies any type of drug, the skin activation should be delivered more energetically versus physically. The traditional effleurage and European manipulations should be avoided. Pressure point and compression techniques are the most viable skin manipulations for the cancer patient.

9. Plant enzymes that do not generate heat can offer many benefits to the cancer patient and are the only form of exfoliation that should be considered. Since the patient's immunity is lowered, skin peels and AHAs should be avoided. Any products or treatments that systemically cause inflammation can lower the patient's resistance and compromise skin.

10. The prescription for appropriate skin care products should be synthetic-free and non-carcinogenic. The fewer the ingredients, the better. Avoid products that are packaged in plastics, due to the leaching of gasses into the products. The avoidance of chemical sunscreens should also be considered. The newest research indicates that the ingredients in these products are highly carcinogenic and are counter indicated when individuals are topically applying drugs or taking them internally.



A new frontier of skin care is upon us and that brings great responsibility that we are adequately trained to handle this delicate population. As medical oncology therapies continue to become more aggressive, patients will look towards spas and aestheticians to provide accurate and professional treatment. It is imperative that aestheticians receive appropriate training that is relevant to these changes.



Anne C. Willis, LE, CEO, is the founder of De La Terre Skincare®, a worldwide leader in holistic and functional skin therapies. Willis has been published in multiple international holistic and beauty publications. One of the industry's most outstanding innovators in the world of functional skin care, Willis lectures nationally regarding holistic skin therapies, collaborative care for medical institutions, and skin reactions incurred by patients receiving combined chemotherapy. She is the director of Oncology Skin Therapeutics™ bringing over 30 years of experience and knowledge to a new generation of skin therapist.

