

# TRANSITIONING TO A HOLISTIC SKIN CARE PRACTICE



## THE WAY TO WELLNESS

BY ANNE C. WILLIS

THE WORD "COSMETICS" IS DERIVED FROM THE GREEK word *kosmos*, which originally referred to order, arrangement and adornment, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. In essence, to be physically beautiful was to be in harmony with the universe.

According to author Michael Quinn Patton, Ph.D., a holistic approach assumes that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. As we gain more knowledge about the effects of skin care ingredients topically and internally, we look to deliver a more appropriate regimen through a holistic approach. Making shifts to one's practice midstream can be daunting and intimidating. Changing a mission statement needs to be planned and thoughtfully executed. But the good news is that once you offer holistic products and treatments your clients will ask: "What took you so long?"

### Holistic skin care regimen

The first step is to educate yourself on the scientific and historical benefits of holistic skin care remedies. Herbs and plant materials have been around for more than 60,000 years and are rich in value and history. There is scientific data that dates back hundreds of years that substantiates the use of herbs for their many medicinal benefits.

Once you gain the proper education on holistic skin care products and practices, you will understand why the switch to a holistic regimen is necessary. Your commitment is conveyed with authenticity and not just a gimmick or trend.

Worried about the transition? Most clients will respect that you are staying current and relevant, and that you are committed to teaching them how to enhance their well-being. Most people are engaged in some form of body wellness. The media has been reporting on wellness practices for a little more than a decade. The Internet allows consumers to investigate and research information on all topics of health and beauty. The bottom line: the consumer is waiting for you to make the leap.

### Start with yourself

Before you introduce a holistic approach to your clients, you must begin with yourself. Look at "your universe." Your universe can be altered by what you choose to think, eat, drink, breathe and apply to your skin. Skin is the body part that gets the most wear and tear, and its appearance is directly influenced by your internal universe.

When skin loses its resilience and strength, it is damaging to your entire universe. This is an important factor in selecting skin care products that will not lower your body's



## BENEFICIAL HERBS

Herbs need to be in their natural state (crude) and applied in high doses. Pairing herbs with other plants that provide similar actions allows for a synergistic balance and therefore favorable results. The following herbs will provide you with a great starting point for the introduction of holistic remedies into your practice.

Specific herbs that are wound healers and provide soothing benefits are:

- **MARSHMALLOW:** a demulcent that soothes and aids in skin regeneration
- **CALENDULA:** a vulnary herb that heals wounds and moves lymph stagnation
- **YARROW:** a vulnary herb that strengthens capillary fragility

resistance, cause endocrine disruption or cancer. Once you have completed a full body scan questionnaire (see sidebar 1), make the necessary changes in your universe that will bring you back to optimal health.

## Changing course

After years of selling synthetic-based products, it can be difficult to transition from one product/practice to another without losing client confidence.

Throughout time there has been a great deal of erroneous information given to the public with health and beauty claims. Some errors have been due to lack of resources and incorrect data.

In the 1960s and 1970s, diets high in omega-6 polyunsaturated fats and partially hydrogenated fatty acids such as safflower oil and margarine were recommended to reduce heart disease. However, long-term studies found that while such diets decreased heart disease, they increased the total death and cancer rate and produced accelerated aging, states the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

Many health references were made on cigarette advertisements between 1927 and 1964. Several companies claimed that "eminent medical authorities, prominent athletes, doctors and dentists" endorsed their brands. In 1953, L&M cigarette ads stated that they were "just what

the doctor ordered." A 1944 ad for Philip Morris cigarettes stated their "facts [were] reported in medical journals on clinical tests made by distinguished doctors. Proof that this better-tasting cigarette is better for you..." In 1953, Viceroy claimed, "New King-Size Viceroy gives double-barreled health protection." Other ads stated smoking was good for your nerves, gave you a "lift," aided digestion, and made other health claims, according to a SourceWatch report titled "A Review of Health References in Cigarette Advertising 1927-1964."

It was not until long-term exposure to these practices revealed how detrimental they were to physical and mental health. Skin is certainly no exception.

## From past to present

The consumer needs to understand that past recommendations were based on what knowledge society had at the time. The medical community had originally substantiated and backed most of this outdated knowledge.

Let your clients know that the changes you have seen in their skin have led you to investigate new systems and products that reflect a more progressive approach to holistic skin therapy. These changes will take their health and skin to a higher level of wellness. Who would not want to make these changes?

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## Delivering relevance

I do not believe in posting services in an extravagant and indulgent sequence. Service menus that read like a romance novel only diminish your practice's professionalism. My model is basically fee-for-service. What I have discovered is that I cannot help people in 50 minutes. It takes time to sit with somebody and figure out what they need. You cannot tell somebody to stop smoking, lose weight or not to be so stressed—unless you teach them how. In order to teach them how, you have to spend time with them. So as their skin care coach, you should be compensated for your knowledge and time.

I recommend creating a menu based on time. Services can range from half an hour, one hour and one-and-a-half hours. No matter what service, recommendation or discussion regarding your client's skin and wellness, you charge for your time.

*continues*



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### HOLISTIC BODY SCAN QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CONTRAINDICATIONS

These internal conditions should be considered when evaluating or caring for various skin conditions:

- Do you have any skin issues such as acne, rosacea, hyperpigmentation, hyperplasia, moles, excessive oiliness or inflammation?
- Do you have digestive imbalances such as bloating, sluggish bowels, IBS, colitis or acid reflex?
- Do you suffer from allergies, asthma, respiratory infections or frequent colds?

To address clients' skin care concerns, select a range of health and beauty products that are additive-free, synthetic-free, cruelty-free and organic—just like nature intended. These products should reflect your newfound holistic philosophy.

I believe that whatever you put on your skin should feed and nourish it. As an herbalist, I treat the skin as I would treat any other barrier function in the body. By repairing, soothing and strengthening resilience, the body can heal itself.

It is vital to be mindful of each individual's constitution at the moment of treatment. This ensures that whatever you do to the skin will not threaten any internal functions that could be in a state of inflammation or crisis. Individuals who suffer from any intestinal or lung inflammatory condition will show signs of inflammation in the skin. Therefore, no skin procedure that would induce inflammation should be performed, whether they are skin peels or resurfacing. These procedures will exacerbate the internal condition. Cancer patients should not be exposed to synthetic skin care products and should receive clearance from their physicians before receiving any skin care or spa treatment.

### Green choice

Going green is now mainstream. Becoming a holistic skin therapist is necessary to help skin recover from 21st century stressful lifestyles. Whatever path we choose to take, we need to honor each other and the individual's choice. ■

**Anne C. Willis** has contributed to the esthetics industry for more than three decades. She offers premiere educational programs in holistic skin care, including staff training at integrative medical facilities and cancer support centers. Willis is the founder of De La Terre Skincare®, a combination of tradition and science that meets modern skin recovery needs.



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