

THE PRICE OF BEAUTY

By: Todd E. Schlesinger, MD, FAAD

■ These are tough economic times for many people. With concerns for the health of our household finances as well as the world economy weighing on our minds, it is easy to forget that cosmetic services and treatments are not a “commodity.” In today’s competitive marketplace, it seems that everyone has begun to offer cosmetic treatments such as Botox, dermal fillers and laser treatments, even those who you may not have thought would.

However, it is easy to forget, when looking at all those ads offering the lowest price on this or that treatment, that these treatments are very technique-dependent. You are not purchasing a mass-made product such as a toaster or a battery. Botox has to be injected in a certain, specific way to achieve the best



result. One has to choose the right dermal filler for a given treatment area and desired result and inject it properly to provide you with the highest level of cosmetic satisfaction.

As simple as it may seem, even a routine Botox injection requires an extensive knowledge of the complex anatomy of the face as well as the interactions of the facial muscles being treated with all of the other muscles and structures around them. Laser treatments require a provider to have the right kind of laser for the problem you have and to be able to effectively choose the proper treatment parameters and perform the treatment in a specific way to achieve the safest and best result. Becoming truly experienced in this area of medicine requires extensive training and practice.

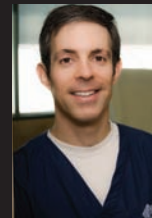
There are certain questions you can ask and things you can look for when choosing a provider, and this has nothing to do with what kind of special they are offering or how nice their last party was.

- 1) Board Certification – What specialty? While physicians of many different specialties have entered the cosmetic dermatology arena, not all have been trained since residency in the specifics of the skin, including structure and function, pathology and the performance of cosmetic procedures. Physicians specializing in the skin during their initial training are likely to have the most experience with cosmetic dermatological procedures.
- 2) Experience – It is acceptable to ask how many of a given procedure your provider has performed and when he or she began to perform that procedure. Ask about complications or problems your provider has had with the procedure.
- 3) Training – Ask where your provider was trained. Do they regularly attend national specialty-specific cosmetic meetings with thought-leaders? How many continuing medical education credits do they earn yearly and in what subjects?

- 4) How are complications or problems addressed? For example, if a dermal filler is injected into an unintended area or forms a persistent bump, how is that taken care of? Make sure you are comfortable with the response and that your provider knows how to handle any complications that may arise. While these procedures are very safe, no procedure is without risk and that risk goes down as experience with the procedure goes up.
- 5) Where is the doctor? In South Carolina, State Board of Medicine guidelines specify that a physician must be on site and available at all times when non-physicians are performing cutaneous medical procedures such as lasers, microdermabrasion or Vibradermabrasion treatments and the injection of fillers and Botox. You may wish to have your physician perform certain procedures such as dermal fillers and Botox. Certain laser procedures are often safely performed by certified, trained laser technicians, while others such as laser resurfacing are not. Again, do not hesitate to ask any provider about their credentials and training as well as the number of treatments they have performed.

Hopefully, this year, we can put all the negative news behind us and concentrate on the business of living well and taking care of ourselves. One way to do that is to invest some of those hard-earned dollars in how we feel about ourselves. This year, treat yourself to that cosmetic package you have been wanting, some Botox and fillers, or maybe that laser resurfacing treatment.

Like they say, time gets away from you. Enjoy the here and the now because you never know what tomorrow may bring. I wish you all a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year! ■



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