

DOCUMENTATION AND THE SALON ESTHETICIAN

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With all the products that have been developed in the last several years and the extensive use of alpha hydroxy acids there is more of a potential for risk and complications from treatments than ever before. A record of all contact between the salon professional and the client is very important for a number of reasons. Of the many good reasons, and perhaps the most important, it protects the esthetician in the event that a client initiates legal action challenging his or her care. In addition, records also aid the esthetician in determining what the client's skin problem is, and what method of treatment to use.

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE CLIENT'S CHART

The client's chart is a focal point for all information. It should include a full description of the client's skin at the time of the appointment, the esthetician's plan for skin care therapy as well as any follow-up home care. Other pertinent information in the client's chart might include the history of the client's skin and any previous facial or medical treatments he or she may have had in the past.

The salon professional's esthetic treatment plan will be based on the assessment of the analysis of all of the below mentioned collected data. The client's chart should contain the following **recorded** documentation: the date of his or her treatment visit: month, day and year (on each page), the client's name on each page, the **client's** address and telephone number, the referral source; name and address

of the person or the physician's **office** that recommended the client to the esthetician, a full detailed description of the client's skin problems in the client's own words, the esthetician's physical observations of the client's skin and any problem areas along with the client's current skin care at-home regime at the time of the skin care session. Most importantly, a record needs to be made of any allergies the client may have to cosmetic ingredients or any substances that will be used in the esthetician's skin care treatment.

FACIAL DIAGRAMS FOR DOCUMENTATION PURPOSES

In addition to written documentation, a facial diagram (photograph or line drawing) can also be included in the client's chart as a visual reminder to systematically record problem site areas for later review and evaluation. An assessment of these diagrams along with the written reports from each treatment visit will eventually help the esthetician to identify a recurring pattern of skin **disfunction**.

Only the areas of involvement will need to be drawn or photographed to present a clear picture. A rubber stamp of the face can be made by a stamp company or a medical template can be purchased at a medical university bookstore or medical supply store.

WHAT THE CLIENT'S RECORD SHOULD NOT CONTAIN

Written comments regarding any negative aspects about the client's character, derogatory or irrelevant information should never be kept in the client's file. The file is a legal document and as such is subject to review by authorized parties.

Because of the legal significance of the client's file, it should not be tampered with in any way. Information entered into the chart should be neat and extremely accurate. Incomplete records can have devastating results in a court dispute and could even confirm a client's complaint of negligence and endangerment.

All entries must be made in ink not pencil. Nothing should ever be erased on a client's record. If a change needs to be made, the original line should be crossed out and the correct entry written right

next to it. All changes need to be initialed by the attending esthetician.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A DISCLAIMER

The esthetician is not legally required to accept a client that who is in need of a service beyond their scope of expertise or experience. If the skin specialist should find themselves in such a predicament, documentation should be made that reflects that a needed treatment is beyond his or her qualifications. If the esthetician is concerned about any aspect of skin care that is believed to require medical therapy, a referral to an appropriate medical health care professional must be made and a written record of that referral must be included in the client's chart,

DOCUMENTATION FOR THE DERMATOLOGIST

Treatment information, systematically documented can also provide a vital link between the skin care specialist and a client's dermatologist. When preparing for an appointment with a client who has had extensive dermatologic treatments the esthetician should consider contacting the client's dermatologist to obtain information on the client's previous or ongoing therapy. Such communication will provide the skin care specialist with information about what medications the client is using and why.

The esthetician should support the physician's medical therapy at all times. A team approach will ensure that the client will be provided with the best possible quality care. A follow up report that contains the esthetic procedures performed and the at-home care products the esthetician recommended to the client should be immediately sent to the dermatologist following the client's skin care session.

FILING AND RELEASING CLIENT'S RECORDS

Filing client's records in alphabetical order, with the client's last name first will assist the skin care specialist in retrieving information quickly and **efficiently**. If a client should call or write with a question regarding their treatment, the esthetician must be able to respond by locating the client's chart in order to release the information to the client or to his or her physician or attorney.

Records should remain in the possession of the beauty specialist at all times and should never be released to the client. However, the client legally has the right to request a copy of his or her records or to review their chart at any time. In the event that the client calls or writes specifically requesting a copy of their chart be sent to a third party then the esthetician cannot refuse but, the original records should never be released and the esthetician should document the request in the client's file.

ESTHETICIAN AND CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY

Information exchanged between the esthetician and the client is legally considered **confidential** and must never be discussed with the client's family or friends, particularly in a social environment. The only exception would be if the client were to give their permission to the esthetician to discuss their condition with a family member or one of their friends.

Client's charts should be protected and out of access to unauthorized persons. If the esthetician were to leave a chart out where someone could look at it, it would be considered a breach of confidentiality.

IN CONCLUSION

Not everyone will be motivated to keep client records. The list of today's esthetician's responsibilities are endless, and yet the salon professional fulfills them, without too much thought or trouble. So why hesitate to take on a little additional responsibility to document carefully, particularly when it can protect you should it ever become necessary to defend your professional actions in a court of law.

Although the information outlined in this article will provide you with the basics to document your facial treatments, I strongly suggest obtaining more information on client record keeping. The appropriate training will provide you with all you need to know to decrease the threat of liability that accompanies providing today's skin care services.