

10 Steps to Optimizing Skincare Retail in Your Practice

by Dr Leslie Baumann

AS SCIENTIFIC TECHNOLOGY advances in the world of skin research, the plethora of skincare options becomes more confusing to patients and physicians alike. It is well recognized that skincare plays an important role in skin health and beauty, but choosing the correct skincare products for patients can be challenging. Although some physicians have an ethical dilemma about recommending skincare products to their patients¹ because they do not want to take advantage of the physician-patient relationship,² many others support the practice of in-office retail when done in an ethical manner.^{3,4,5} In 2005, I surveyed my patients in the Division of Cosmetic Dermatology at the University of Miami to see if they wanted me to sell skincare products. We found that 100% of them wanted us to sell skincare products because they 1) wanted to make sure they were using the right products and 2) for convenience. Interestingly, many of them stated that even when they were given a product sample they were afraid that they were not buying the proper product in the store. For this reason, I developed guidelines at the University of Miami in 2006 to follow to ensure ethical skincare retail in the practice setting by improving patient outcomes.^{6,7} This system has now been adopted by many dermatology practices in the United States.⁸

The goal of in-office skincare retail is to achieve good patient outcomes with minimal side effects, which strengthens the physician-patient relationship. In order to achieve this goal, you need to find the most efficacious products and properly match them to your patient's skin type. In addition, patients must be compliant with the prescribed regimen. If it were only that simple! The difficulty in separating fact (science) from fiction (marketing claims), time constraints with each patient, and the need for staff training can complicate this process. The skincare retail process involves 10 main steps.

Step 1: Know Your Ingredient Science

There is so much interesting research on cosmetic ingredients, but there is also plenty of hype and misinformation. One important point is that no one ingredient is right for all skin types even though companies would love for you to believe that their product works for everyone. In this age of customization, the ingredients should be targeted to the patient's particular needs. Another important rule is that every ingredient in the product is important; there is no such thing as an inactive ingredient. When the first prescription retinoid (tretinoin) entered the market, it contained an acne-causing ingredient known as isopropyl myristate. This may be one of the reasons that patients would break out when beginning tretinoin. It is also important to understand that it is not just the ingredients that are important but the "recipe" used to combine them. Although the product label lists ingredients, it does not list the formulation's recipe, which is proprietary and often

patented. The "recipe" includes the order that ingredients are added in the process, the pH, the amount of each ingredient, the temperature at which the ingredient is added, and many other important factors that determine the final chemistry. Ingredients like vitamin C, green tea, and soy must be formulated properly to be effective. Many "copycat" brands, such as the Walgreens and CVS generics, have identical ingredient lists. However, they cannot use the patented recipe and therefore their end product is different. There is so much to know about individual ingredients that I devoted an entire book called *Cosmeceuticals and Cosmetic Ingredients* (McGraw-Hill 2014) to the subject. It is important for you to understand which ingredients are worthless (like stem cells and peptides) and which ones are crucial (such as retinoids and antioxidants), so that you can arm your patients with products that work.

Step 2: Understand the Cosmeceutical Formulation

Formulation knowledge (cosmetic chemistry) is required to take ingredients and combine them in a way that enhances rather than hinders their activity. Cosmetic chemists function much like chefs who combine ingredients with cooking techniques to enhance the flavor and presentation of food. The importance of the ingredient recipe cannot be overstated. It is the interactions of the ingredients in the formula that determines the end product and how effective it is, how elegant it feels, and how it smells. The "cosmetic elegance" of a product is directly related to patient compliance and product sales. After all, if it works well and smells bad and feels icky, consumers will not use it.

Step 3: Understand the Manufacturing and Packaging Process

How a product is made and packaged is crucial. For example, retinol and ascorbic acid break down when exposed to light and air, yet some manufacturing plants use large stirring vats that are open to air and light. The process of packaging the completed product is also important because this must be done in an airtight and light-free manner. In some cases, the product is formulated in one place and shipped to



Take the time to educate your patients on their skin type and skin issues. If you explain why you chose each product, why the particular ingredients are important, and why the order should be followed in the regimen, they are more likely to be compliant and get better results. Information about their skin type, skin challenges, and regimen specifics can be developed before the patient encounter to save time during the consultation. Emailed educational newsletters targeted to various skin types can be used to educate patients and keep them informed of new products and procedures.

another location for final packaging; several ingredients can lose their potency during transit. Finally, the container that the product is packaged in is important. Air and light can get into tubes, affecting the efficacy of a product.

Step 4: Know Ingredient Interactions

The order in which ingredients are placed on the skin is crucial because ingredients have chemical reactions with each other and can inactivate each other and affect absorption. The order of application and the combination of ingredients affects stability, efficacy, safety, and the chemical structure. Master formulators understand that every ingredient in the formulation matters and there is really no such thing as an inactive ingredient. Ingredients can affect penetration and render other ingredients more or less effective depending on the order in which the ingredients are used on the skin. For example, olive oil actually increases penetration of other ingredients because it has a high content of oleic acid, while safflower oil can decrease penetration by strengthening the skin barrier.

Step 5: Properly Identify the Baumann Skin Type[®] Using a Validated Questionnaire

The process of accurately assessing a patient's skin type is arduous because you must ask numerous historical questions to be complete. Looking at a patient's skin at one point in time is not as accurate as asking a series of questions about how their skin has behaved in the past under varying conditions. To determine a patient's Baumann Skin Type[®], a scientifically validated questionnaire⁹ can be taken on a tablet device in the waiting room. The questionnaire takes three to five minutes, does not require a staff member, and assigns the patient to a skin type based on skin oiliness, dryness, sensitivity, uneven skin tone, and risk factors for

wrinkles.^{10,11,12} When these four important parameters are combined, there are 16 possible Baumann Skin Types[®], which yield an accurate history of the patient's skin characteristics.¹³ These skin types are designated by a four-letter code such as OSPW (Oily, Sensitive, Pigmented, Wrinkle-prone) or DRNT (Dry, Resistant, Nonpigmented, Tight).¹⁴

Step 6: Choose Ingredients Appropriate for the Baumann Skin Type[®]

It is important to understand the characteristics of various ingredients and match those to your patient's skin type. Once the patient's skin issues are identified, matching them with ingredients that will help their skin and avoiding ingredients that worsen their skin is paramount.^{15,16} For example, acne patients that have dry skin from an impaired skin barrier will not be able to tolerate benzoyl peroxide due to dryness and irritation. Oily patients will often not use chemical sunscreens because they are greasy and clog pores. Wrinkle-prone patients with stinging sensitive skin may not tolerate ascorbic acid, glycolic acid or other acidic products. Choosing the correct ingredients will improve compliance and outcomes.

Step 7: Choose Products Appropriate for Each Baumann Skin Type[®]

There are many factors to consider in choosing which brands and particular products (also known as SKUs or "stock keeping units") work for each skin type. When selecting brands, pay close attention to the type of research studies the company does on their products and confirm that the study was done with the final formulated product and not just the ingredient. For example, ascorbic acid has been shown to increase collagen production in cell cultures.¹⁷ However, in order to feel confident that

the product does the same when applied to living skin, studies should be conducted using the entire ascorbic acid containing product because this ingredient does not penetrate the skin well unless it is properly formulated.¹⁸ Brands often have a core competency, such as sunscreen technology or ascorbic acid formulation, so choose the SKUs that feature this technology. There is no reason to use every product of the same brand; instead choose the best SKUs from each brand, combine them and test them on various skin types to see which products and combinations of products work best for each skin type.

Step 8: Design the Regimen and Order of Application of Products

Once you have determined your patient's skin type and matched the proper products to their skin type, you must tell them exactly how to apply them. The order in which products are applied makes a difference. Consider ingredient interactions, ingredient penetration times, and cross reactions, plus skin type factors such as the condition of the skin barrier, sebum production and thickness of the stratum corneum. You must also consider lifestyle factors like sun exposure and bathing habits. Provide a printed regimen with step-by-step instructions for morning and night to ensure compliance.

Step 9: Educate the Patient

Take the time to educate your patients on their skin type and skin issues. If you explain why you chose each product, why the particular ingredients are important, and why the order should be followed in the regimen, they are more likely to be compliant and get better results. Information about their skin type, skin challenges, and regimen specifics can be developed before the patient encounter to save time during the consultation. Emailed educational newsletters targeted to various skin types can be used to educate patients and keep them informed of new products and procedures.

Step 10: Encourage Compliance

Schedule a follow-up visit after one month to check on their progress. If you prescribed a retinoid, patients may experience irritation and stop using it. This follow-up visit is important to ensure compliance. If you have an imaging system, baseline and follow-up photos help illustrate patients' progress and keep them vigilant. Four weeks is a good time frame because patients tend to lose interest at the one-month mark, but

most products take eight to 12 weeks to provide visible results. Emphasize how important the follow-up visit is at the initial appointment, and schedule the follow-up visit before they leave the office.

The skincare retail process must be followed precisely to improve patient outcomes. The Skin Type Solutions Franchise System was developed to overcome these hurdles and save the physician time and money by streamlining the process.^{19,20} It works like this:

- The patient takes the skin type questionnaire and is assigned to one of the 16 Baumann Skin Types®.
- A staff member matches the skin type to the pre-set regimen.
- The doctor (or designee) reviews the regimen and makes any necessary changes or additions (including prescription medications).
- The patient is presented with a step-by-step skincare regimen.
- The patient purchases the correct products.



How to Ethically Sell Skincare Products in Your Practice

- ✓ Understand cosmetic ingredient science
- ✓ Ensure product quality
- ✓ Choose only the efficacious SKUs from each brand
- ✓ Identify the patient's skin type using a validated questionnaire¹²
- ✓ Correctly match the product and ingredients to skin type
- ✓ Ensure that the ingredients do not adversely affect each other
- ✓ Provide exact regimen directions
- ✓ Provide education to increase compliance
- ✓ Improve outcomes
- ✓ Provide competitive pricing

- The patient is given instruction sheets to increase compliance.
- The patient returns in four weeks for follow-up with the staff designee to ensure that the regimen is being properly followed.

Proper skincare plays an important role in skin health and appearance and, when used correctly, improves the results achieved with lasers, lights, fillers, toxins and other medical procedures. Knowledgeable physicians that are specifically trained in cosmeceutical science are the best source of skincare advice because of their unique knowledge of science and concern for the best outcomes for their patient. **A**



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Dr Leslie Baumann is the Director of the Baumann Cosmetic and Research Institute in Miami Beach and is internationally known for her contributions to the field of cosmetic dermatology. She founded the University of Miami Cosmetic Medicine and Research Institute in 1997, prior to which she served as Professor of Dermatology at the University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine. She is a Fellow of the prestigious American Dermatological Association.



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