

"A PEDICURE MAY BE A LIFE OR DEATH CIRCUMSTANCE FOR CLIENTS WITH HEALING ISSUES."



**THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS OF INFECTION, FUNGUS** and injury due to manicure and pedicure services gone awry is on the rise. With the nail care industry generating six billion dollars a year in revenue (and continuing to increase), something needed to be done for the health of consumers and technicians alike.

The change that came was met with a strong, yet simple four-word statement made by clients: "It is about time!" This sums up the new concept of the foot spa. This new type of spa offers pedicures and additional services, such as manicures and massages, with the safety of their clients protected, while also working closely with an on-site podiatry practice. Medical foot spas target the podiatrist's patients initially, and then branch

out to market to the community. Soon, the rest of the city desires their services as well. "Quite often, one of the first comments made by clients when they first arrive in our foot spa is: 'It is about time,'" says Michael Horwitz, D.P.M., a licensed podiatrist with over 25 years of experience. He is the owner of CleanSpa, a 1,000 square foot spa in Chesterfield, MO that he developed. It is located adjacent to his practice, Feet For Life.

"Some stand in the lobby, arms open wide with their head thrown back and make this comment: 'It is about time!' They want the nail technicians and management to know how much they appreciate the foot spa. They wanted to find a safe, health conscious pedicure that is also wonderfully relaxing. Now, they have one."

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When clients use this statement, they are referring to the combination of several components of the foot spa concept: atmosphere, cleanliness, expertise and care. When all of these components come together with the utmost attention to detail applied, the result is a facility and staff that appeals to the client's senses, while also addressing the areas of medical need that may exist and the beauty they desire. This leaves a lasting and very much appreciated result long after their services are complete, and builds a long term client/provider relationship.

### Atmosphere

Atmosphere must be apparent from the moment the client steps into the spa. This is the feeling the spa has chosen for their clients to have when they walk in. It moves them toward experiencing comfort via ambiance, and to trusting the spa with their care. Whether the décor is trendy or Victorian, it must combine top-notch technology with esthetics and cleanliness in a way that moves their mood in the right direction, while also building a confident returning and referring clientele.

It is important to keep all sensory details in mind, such as sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. Each detail is considered individually and collectively with the other details. Comfortable seating, luxurious surroundings, soothing spa music, a well-trained nail technician with just the right touch and knowledge, a tasty beverage and a delicious fragrance gently wafting through the air ... now that is atmosphere.

### Cleanliness

Cleanliness is a detail that interplays among all of the components in one fashion or another, but specifics that are important to foot care must be present. For example, the incidence of fungus and other infections and their transmission is on the rise among nail clients. Podiatrists indicate one common denominator among many infected clients: visits to spas or salons. Technology makes cleanliness as easy as 1-2-3, so not performing perfect infection control reflects laziness in the area of sanitation, and indicates that these spas or salons care very little about their clients and staff. Foot spas recognize the importance of perfect infection control, and will make the investments in the products and training necessary to meet and exceed good standards in the area of safety through cleanliness.

Incidences of infection in their clients is a reason podiatrists are investing in foot spas—they have seen too many foot infections allegedly caused by poor infection control in nail salons being reported. Turning this negative into a positive has produced an opportunity for both podiatrists and nail technicians. Podiatrists can open a foot spa to support the health of their patients, and nail technicians have a new employment resource.

### Expertise

This component reflects the time and investment a facility has made in their staff to upgrade their skills for working safely with the spa's clients and patients. Additionally, the spa must choose nail technicians who truly care about the safety of their clients. Experts believe that over 20 percent of the clients in spas

may have chronic illnesses such as diabetes mellitus; a higher percentage of the clients in foot spas will have chronic illnesses than those in regular spas and salons because they are owned by podiatrists, so training is imperative. Podiatrists now have a resource to train their technicians properly for working with these clients, and technicians wishing to upgrade their skills in nail care can take the same training through MediNail Learning Center, an online training system. This training prepares nail technicians to assist chronically ill clients while providing services in a podiatric setting. "Podiatrists believe there is a need for additional safety and precautionary training for nail technicians who perform services on their patients," says Janet McCormick, co-owner of MediNail Learning Center. "Now, instead of just saying, 'No nail salons,' or 'nail salons are dirty,' they can open one of their own with techs they know perform well within safety parameters. They can offer luxury services while expanding the consumer traffic and safety for both industries."

"Foot spas can bring about positive change for these industries, possibly bringing them into a partnership in protecting clients while providing clients luxury and foot care," states Dr. Horwitz. "Truly a pedicure may be a life or death circumstance for clients with healing issues, and stepping up to performing expert and safe pedicures for these clients can become a life altering opportunity for nail technicians, and we look forward to being an integral part of that metamorphosis. Services with well trained nail technicians always begins with the client's health in mind through the performance of an initial evaluation, and then continues throughout the service."

In addition, the accessibility to potential medical care onsite supports a call to a podiatrist to evaluate "not normal" circumstances that clients might not have been aware of. It prevents inappropriate pedicures; and available well-care education is easily implemented to help clients avoid potential suffering, and the medical circumstances that may result from it occur during a fast and dirty pedicure service. The products carried by the medical foot spa and recom-

continues

BY DENISE BAICH



photo courtesy of CleanSpa, Chesterfield, MO

mended by the pedicurists are superior to those purchased by many non-medical salons or spas; they reflect the level of care provided by a podiatrist-owned foot spa.

Tying together a podiatry practice and foot spa is beneficial for both businesses. The podiatry practice feeds well patients to the spa, as the spa refers potential podiatry patients to the podiatry office. This magnifies the importance of the factors mentioned above, and enhances the success of both. Just consider how welcoming it is for a client to travel from a medical situation to a spa setting, or how reassuring it is to move from a spa setting to a medical setting at the very moment a medical need is discovered. The trained nail technicians readily support this care for their clients from one scenario

to the other, enabling the podiatry office to assist a larger client base, with their well-being first and foremost in mind.

I would like to re-state the strong, yet simple statement, "It is about time!" Hearing that statement roll off the tongue of a precious client who has just endured a year of chemotherapy is truly memorable. This special guest was finally able to experience a manicure and pedicure again without fear, knowing she would be safe in our hands. The rewarding satisfaction of knowing that is only trumped by her next statement, "Thank you, I feel like a woman again."

Combining skills, talent, expertise and sanitation creates a dynamic and cohesive bond between the client and the spa. ■

**Denise Baich** has 31 years of experience as a nail technician, and has also been a salon manager and owner. Currently, she is the spa director at CleanSpa in Chesterfield, MO, a specialty pedicure foot spa. CleanSpa is one of the first foot spas in the country, and specializes in pedicures that are safe, clean and luxurious. For more information, email [denise@cleanspa.com](mailto:denise@cleanspa.com).



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