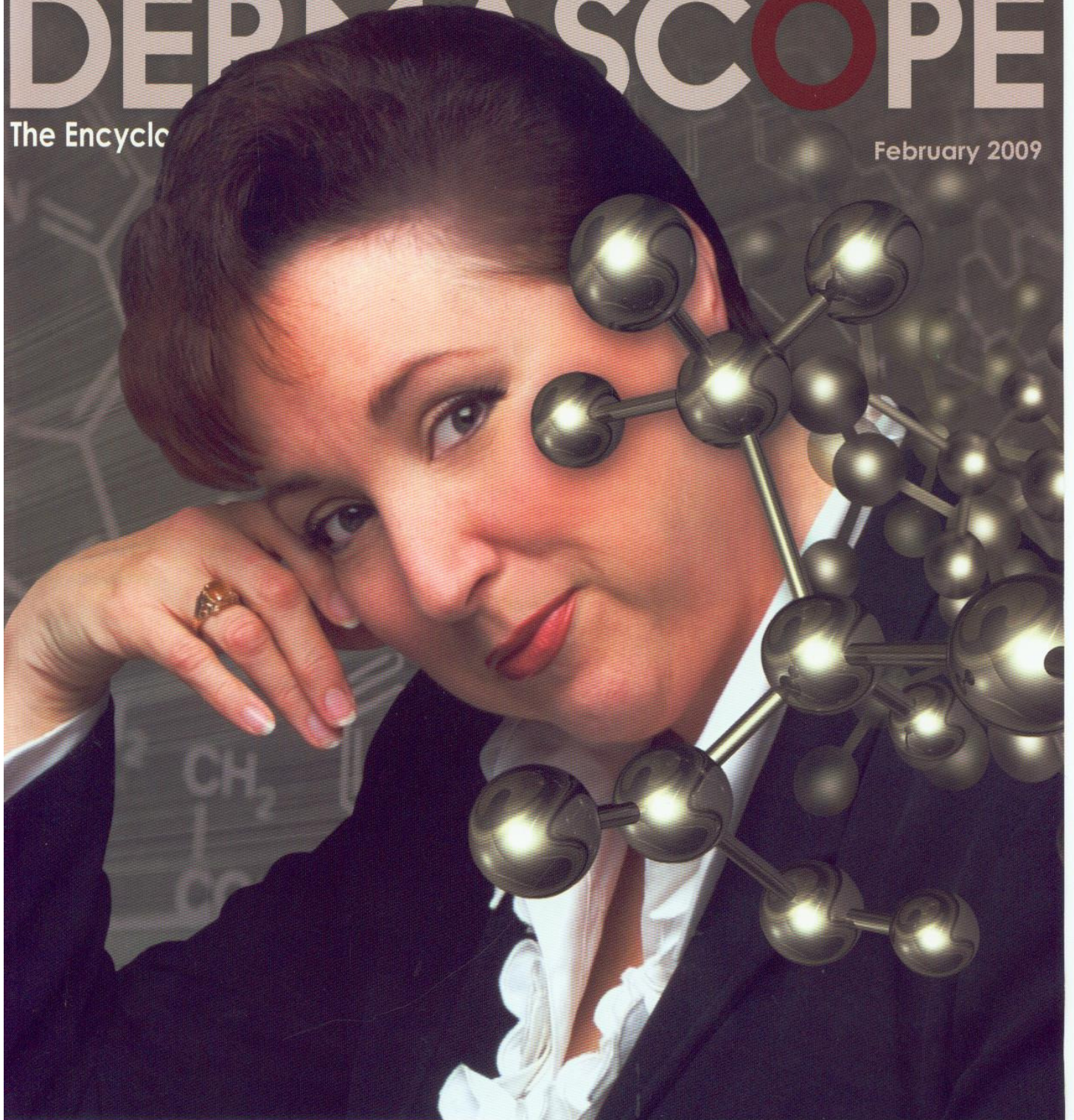


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The Encyclo

February 2009



S82 P2 \*\*\*\*\*SCH 3-DIGIT 852  
800440 VOL 34 NO 2  
JEFF LEWIS  
NATIONAL LASER INSTITUTE  
16601 N 90TH ST  
SCOTTSDALE AZ 85260-2788

A Legend:

Rebecca Gadberry

The Official Publication of  
Aesthetics International Association



# CONTENTS

February 2009



88

## Feature

### 88 *No More Fears*

writer Louis Silberman

Dealing with ethnic skin tones in laser hair removal should no longer be a fear for the trained professional. Study this article for information regarding lasers and performing on multiple ethnicities.



66

## Articles

### 66 *Just a Thread*

writer Michelle Ornstein

In this article, read the interesting methods of threading, along with the process of the art itself.



72

### 72 *The Skin Care of Waxing*

writer Tina Zillmann

Learn the problems and solutions for new skin pigment issues and hair removal via waxing in this article.



80

### 80 *Laser Safety 101*

writer Betty Minor

As stated in the article, laser safety is an equally important part of your curriculum for laser aesthetic training. It is the backbone of your program. Multiple bullet points and sidebars cover the information you need to know about lasers.



100

### 100 *The Hairy Truth on Lasers and IPLs*

writer Randy Brenner

With the array of questions regarding lasers versus IPLs, this article covers it all. Written out almost as a Q&A, it will not leave you with unanswered questions.



108

### 108 *Keep Men on Your Mind*

writer Jenny Hogan

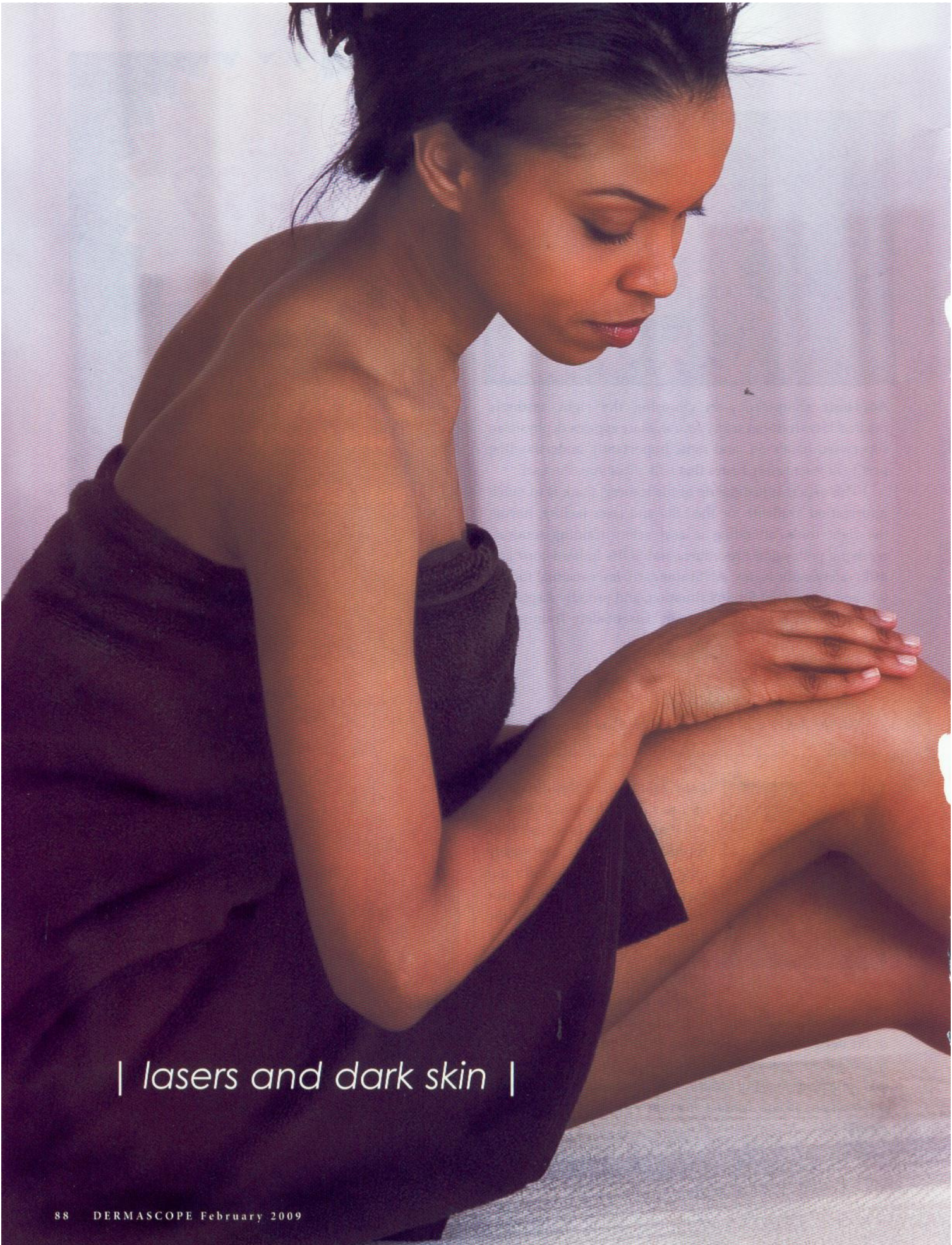
We always need more men... in the spa. Men account for 25 percent of your business, so you should definitely be marketing to them. Read over this article for tips on how to reel them in.

# DERMASCOPE

The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics

VOLUME 34 NO. 2





| lasers and dark skin |



# NO MORE FEARS

writer Louis Silberman

Out of the 11.7 million medical aesthetic procedures performed in 2007, laser hair removal accounted for *over* 1.4 million treatments and 12 percent of the industry's massive growth. This once unheard of treatment is *now* the third most sought after non-surgical procedure, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.

The ability to gain self-confidence by ridding oneself of hair in embarrassing places and freedom from the monotony of shaving are just some of the benefits individuals seek through laser hair removal.

Unfortunately, Latin, African American, Asian, and other ethnic groups with dark skin tones are often discouraged from choosing laser hair removal because of the procedure's early reputation for damaging darker skin. Because of poor quality control and lack of trained laser technicians during this period, it is still a common misconception that laser hair removal treatments are not safe for individuals with darker skin. The truth is that advances in laser technology and technique have caused an explosion in the demand for these treatments by consumers with dark skin types, creating a market that is currently outpacing the number of professionals with the training to perform this procedure.

Medical aesthetic professionals face a wide variety of concerns in conjunction with different skin tones and types. The key to overcoming each concern and ensuring a safe and effective treatment for prospective hair removal candidates relies heavily on education. Laser technicians must inform clients on the science behind laser hair removal and the advancement of cosmetic lasers; furthermore, continuing to educate themselves on proper laser hair removal techniques and skin tone concerns in order to better suit the client's unique skin needs.



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hair removal treatments on a variety of skin types. Ethnic skin tones and darker-skinned individuals require laser light with long wavelengths and pulse widths, preferably with an Nd: YAG laser. Shorter wavelength lasers, such as the 810nm Diode may be effective for some lighter ethnic skin tones, but not all. This type of laser is so well absorbed into melanin that it can lead to epidermal damage on darker skin types and can cause hyperpigmentation, a darkening of the skin, or hypopigmentation, a dramatic lightening of the skin.

Certain ethnic skin types can utilize the 800nm Diode Laser, but this type of laser can only accurately target the correct melanin if proper cooling attachments are integrated with highly specific and expanded pulses. Although this type of laser may be the appropriate depth of laser penetration for some, the risk of burn on darker skin types remains present. The Nd: YAG 1064nm laser is able to travel deep underneath the skin in order to reach melanin present in the hair follicle without harming epidermal pigment. This is the most optimal laser for ethnic skin tones. In addition to the 1064nm's long wavelength, there are several other parameters to work with, including the timing of the laser pulses, the compression of the device and the amount of energy put into the skin. These modifications should be taken into consideration in order to perform the safest treatment with enough administered energy to produce effective results.



### Bumps and Itches

Laser hair removal is typically classified as a cosmetic concern, and usually associated with the general removal of unwanted, pesky hair on the legs or underarms. For ethnic skin tones, the choice may not be that simple. Certain skin and hair conditions, which require the medical attention of laser hair removal, are more prevalent in individuals with dark skin.

Folliculitis is a skin condition prominent in African-American men and characterized by unsightly razor bumps and itchy patches on the face, neck, and back, commonly associated with shaving. The irritation is the body's natural response to ingrown facial hairs that cause inflamed papules and pustules. Over time, the condition can become chronic and infected, causing keloid scarring and hypopigmented lesions. Fortunately, the advances made in laser hair removal for darker skin types have given laser technicians the ability to successfully and safely treat this issue.



**The Fitzpatrick Scale**

The Fitzpatrick Scale, developed in 1975 by T.B. Fitzpatrick, a Harvard dermatologist, is the current and recognized method among the medical aesthetics community to classify skin colors and their reaction to UV light. By dividing skin tones into types 1 to 6, aesthetic professionals can accurately determine the best technique required for the specific client. Understanding the various skin types and conditions that can affect skin color is also essential for providing safe and effective laser hair removal treatments. For example, a tan may cause skin to have the appearance of a darker skin type; however, tanned skin reacts very differently from naturally dark skin. In addition, some individuals may appear to have light skin, but their ethnic background and genetics are of darker skin decent and require different laser settings. These are two common

and often forgotten concerns when performing laser hair removal procedures.

Skin types 4 to 6 involve the largest risk for injury if a laser technician is not properly trained in treating dark skin types. Skin in these three categories includes people with Latin, Mediterranean, Asian, East Indian, and African American ethnic backgrounds. Using the wrong setting on a cosmetic laser can cause irreversible damage in the form of hyperpigmentation, hypopigmentation, burning, or scarring. Performing a test spot is crucial before continuing with a full treatment. Test spots with different levels of intensity can inform an aesthetician of the skin's reaction to treatment. When test-spotting on skin types 4 to 6, it is important to wait 48 to 72 hours before performing the full treatment. Skin tones of this variety often have a delayed reaction to exposure.

The Fitzpatrick Skin-Typing Scale		
Skin Type	Skin Color	Reaction to Sun
1	Very White or Freckled	Always Burns/Never Tans
2	White	Usually Burns/Sometimes Tans
3	White to Olive	Sometimes Burns/Always Tans
4	Brown	Rarely Burns
5	Dark Brown	Very Rarely Burns/Moderately Pigmented
6	Black	Highly Pigmented



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**Tips for Discussing Laser Hair Removal with Clients**

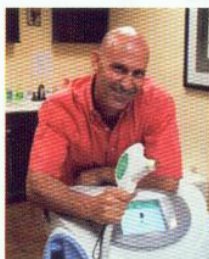
Before any laser hair removal procedure, a quality client consultation is necessary and should include discussions about client skin type, client expectations, and conditions that can affect treatment outcome. Below are a few fundamental considerations that treatment providers should keep in mind when treating clients with ethnic skin tones:

- No two patients are alike, and treatment outcome cannot be predicted.
- Clearly describe the need for multiple treatments, sometimes five to 10 for darker skin types 4, 5, and 6.
- Discuss potential risks for scarring, hypo- or hyperpigmentation.
- Review the client skin type and genetic disposition for any history of keloid scarring.
- Be cautious of any active skin infections, as treatments should not be given on areas with lesions or sores.
- Be sure to treat around tattoos, permanent makeup, or pigmented lesions.
- A client taking Accutane® to treat acne should wait at least six months, as this type of medicine increases skin's susceptibility to damage from the sun and laser light.
- Clients should wait at least six weeks after waxing or plucking. The hair must grow back naturally before a laser

hair removal treatment will have an effect.

- Instruct clients they need to avoid extended sun exposure, tanning beds, and self-tanners for at least two weeks before treatment.

For the benefit of the client and the laser technician's ability to provide the best possible treatment – receiving specialized training in laser hair removal for ethnic tones and darker-skinned individuals is an invaluable safeguard for all medical aesthetic practices.



Louis Silberman is president and founder of National Laser Institute, the largest cosmetic laser and medical aesthetic training center in North America. As an expert in medical aesthetics, a medical spa owner and nationally recognized author, marketing speaker and business consultant, Silberman has been a driving force behind the organization of advanced

laser safety and clinical practice courses for professionals who use cosmetic lasers. 800-982-6817, louis@nlionline.com



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