



Mastering the Aesthetic Consult: Everything You Need to Do Before the Patient Steps Foot in Your Door

As a medical aesthetics practitioner, your ability to positively impact the lives of your patients has never been greater. Advances in aesthetics mean that consumers are now able to achieve superior enhancement with less downtime, discomfort, cost, or inconvenience than ever before.

But the reality is that clients will never experience your expertise if you are unable to get them through your door. Once in your office, you must convince them you are the right provider to trust for their procedure.

To get a “yes” from a prospective patient requires you and your practice to master the art of the aesthetic consult. This report is the first in a series that will cover every aspect of this key consultation.

The insights are drawn from Venus Concept’s experience partnering with the most successful aesthetic practitioners in more than 20 countries. We offer the most innovative energy-based aesthetic technology, unparalleled support and commitment to practice enhancement. This series shares the insights we have gained through our deep industry experience.

The aesthetics consult begins long before the appointment

The success of an aesthetic consultation may be decided long before your prospective patient arrives for his or her appointment. Consumers begin forming impressions of your abilities, integrity, and trustworthiness from the moment they hear or see your name.

This first guide will cover aspects that influence the aesthetic consult *before* the patient arrives at your office.

It’s important to understand the mindset of your client. Patient fear and uncertainty are perhaps your biggest challenges. Many people have heard horror stories from friends and colleagues or watched programs like *Botched*. They feel a suboptimal result is not only possible, but probable. Your ability to establish client trust through your expertise, manner, office environment, and documented positive outcomes are paramount.

Create the image of your practice that you want to convey

When done properly, branding is a service to consumers because it enables you to communicate key information:

- An accurate idea of the services you provide
- The type of person most suited to your services
- How you are different from other providers
- What your training and expertise are

- The way they can expect to be treated in your office

A good branding strategy helps consumers by making it easier for them to make choices and feel confident they have made the right choice for them. It eases their anxiety about what they might experience when they visit your clinic.

Branding is a nuanced art, and we will only touch on the basics here. But this crucial step covers the way you represent your practice (discreet and bespoke, or geared toward a youthful clientele seeking to delay signs of aging) through such attributes as office location, name, slogan, logo, typeface, color choice, décor, and more.

Consistency in this presentation is key. Consumers will get confused if you promote yourself based on price one week and your luxe spa-like experience the next. This consistency must carry over to your website and interactions on social media and other marketing initiatives.

Your website must do a good job representing you to potential consumers and providing information about your treatments and experience. If you have any doubt, have your website evaluated by an expert.

Another way patients form impressions of you is through review sites such as Yelp or RealSelf.com. These are widely read, especially by younger consumers, and multiple negative reviews can be a death knell for your practice. Your marketing efforts should monitor these regularly, respond to comments, and establish a proactive campaign to generate positive reviews.

Conceptualizing your service offerings

Consumers today are armed with information and often are well-versed in the subtleties of different injectables and the latest device developments. This has increased the number of prospective patients who are shopping for a specific service, as if it were a commodity.

This tendency generally has a downward pressure on pricing and profitability, and also influences the patient experience. If a patient has decided to shop for a syringe of neurotoxin, you may have already lost the opportunity to apply your expertise and suggest treatments that facilitate or do a better job in achieving the desired outcome.

Not every practice has the luxury of getting away from pricing by commoditized service. But if possible, give thought to defining your service offerings by procedures and outcomes (such as facial rejuvenation or body contouring). This gives you greater ability to combine and tailor treatments to the consumer's precise presentation, achieve superior results, price appropriately, and make your practice unique from competitors.

From first contact to appointment

Once a consumer has decided to explore your services, every interaction must facilitate the journey to a "yes."

This usually begins with the prospective client's first phone call to your office. Of course, that call must be answered promptly by a friendly voice. The consumer may be ready to schedule an appointment, which should be straightforward.

But they may also have questions about your procedures and prices, and this must be handled with great care. This first communication will go a long way to solidifying their expectations in terms of trustworthiness, outcome, and cost.

So, staff training is crucial, and you may decide that anything beyond the most routine questions should be handled by a specially trained staff member or patient care coordinator. All staff, but especially this member, must be a great ambassador for your practice. A care coordinator is to large extent a sales person, and he or she must represent your philosophy and have a deep understanding of treatments.

Should you charge for an initial consult?

Depending on your market and service offerings, you may want to charge at least a nominal fee for the aesthetic consult appointment.

The advantages of doing so are that you increase the perceived value of the service and weed out consumers who might be no-shows, lowest-price shoppers, or not fully motivated buyers. Some practices have found doing this increases the conversion rate of prospective patients. In addition, it makes good business sense to at least cover your overhead for 30 to 60 minutes of valuable staff or provider time.

However, this practice is most common in clinics that offer cosmetic surgery as well as non-invasive treatments, and may meet resistance among consumers interested in entry-level treatments.

The drawback of charging for an initial consult is that you may deter some prospective patients, including those tentative consumers who would be persuaded to move forward by the expertise and care on display in your office.

One way to counter this is to offer to apply the consult fee to their first treatment. Alternatively, you can offer current clients cards for free consults so they can refer friends. Since those referrals are likely to already have a positive impression of your practice, there is a higher likelihood those consults will turn into treatments.

In the next sections of this guide, we will cover further aspects of the aesthetic consult with the goal of improving your acceptance ratio. If you have questions about anything covered here, please get in touch with us at 888.907.0115 option 5. At Venus Concept, we are committed to your success and eager to serve you.

