



## CREATING AN OFFICE 'OASIS': PART 2

What makes a doctor's office an oasis? In part 1 of *Creating an Office Oasis*, the focus was on how positive human interactions with you and your staff can increase patient satisfaction and encourage referrals and return visits for elective procedures. This month the focus is on how other aspects of the environment you create in your office can help you build and grow your aesthetics practice.

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However patients decide to come to your practice in the first place — referral, article in the paper, or internet research on a procedure — winning their loyalty and their return for elective procedures may depend on creating a positive impression that supports your practice objectives. How you go about that depends to some extent on your own personal style, patient population and the firm you hire to design your space. Drs. Jason Pozner, Joel Schlessinger and Amy Derick share some of their practices for creating an environment that helps attract and keep patients.

### THE LOOK: CLEAN AND NEAT

While the physicians interviewed had different ideas about many of the components

of office design and amenities, on the point of cleanliness, there was no disagreement. "The overall impression should be one of scrupulous cleanliness, neatness and attention to detail," says Dr. Pozner, whose front desk is shown **above**. "The facility has to be pristine, always ready for inspection with no garbage, no dust, and everything in place. Would you go into an operating room in a facility with a dirty waiting room?"

Dr. Derick, whose office is professionally cleaned every day, agrees, adding, "If your office is dirty, people may assume that they are receiving substandard medical care." Beyond the spotless floors and immaculate treatment rooms that bespeak attention to the highest standards of practice hygiene, Dr. Derick seeks a clean look in

keeping with her belief that people are more relaxed in a neat, clutter-free environment. It is for this reason she has connected waiting room chairs and doesn't offer food or drinks. "Although I think that separate waiting room chairs are more stylish, I opted for connected chairs because staff doesn't have to straighten them several times a day. We also try to keep food and mess to a minimum."

### WAITING ROOM

Beyond the sparkling cleanliness all demand, Dr. Schlessinger strives to create an environment that is "warm and welcoming" in both his medical office and adjacent day spa. "I think there's a fine line between making your office attractive and



making it not only appealing but also comfortable with touches that might be seen in an upscale home.” He believes a glitzy office may make patients question your dedication to their best interests.

#### Medical vs. Aesthetics Patients

Alluding to the differences between medical and aesthetics patients, Dr. Schlessinger describes the difference in décor and amenities between his day spa and medical office. “The day spa has a different ambiance — more calming, less clinical, more nurturing perhaps. Although we don’t want anything jarring on either side, I think it’s important to have a calming influence in the day spa.”

This is reflected in the art, music and furniture. For example, in the medical of-



Figure 1. Dr. Pozner's office.



Figure 2. Dr. Schlessingers office.



Figure 3. Dr. Derick's waiting room.

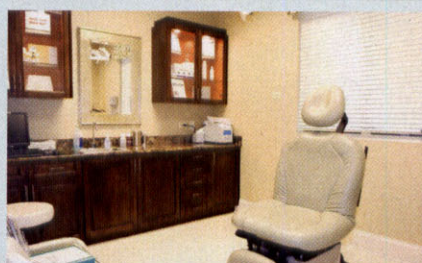


Figure 4. An exam room in Dr. Derick's office.

office, chairs are comfortable but durable enough to take the abuse of a child, while the day spa has couches as well which he believes “sets tone for the experience people expect to have.” In both offices he displays photographs or travel posters, which he says “bring across an aspect of my life and interests” — but even these are “a little more sedate and calming” in the spa than the art in the medical area.

On the medical side the reading material is informational, there is television but no music and refreshments are limited to coffee and muffins in the morning. His spa patients are offered water and various chocolates, high-profile monthlies such as *Vogue* and *Glamour*, and there is music, not television.

#### TREATMENT ROOMS

Dr. Derick’s treatment rooms are all created equal. “The rooms are identically laid out so that I do the exact same physical sequence when I see my patients. It saves me time and allows me to focus on the patient during our visit.” Basically it should sound quiet but not silent in the treatment rooms, says Dr. Derick. “I like music softly playing in the background because I think it fills the silence when I am doing a procedure or examining a patient.” She says she prefers spa music at this time, adding, “I used to play classical music, but people complained about the crescendo sections. I think it made them nervous.”

#### EXTRAS

Dr. Pozner’s waiting room includes a coffee machine with a variety of different flavors as well as espresso and cappuccino. It also sports some marketing tools — bottles with the name of the practice printed on them and video promotional materials. However, he admits, the television nearly always ends up on the news channel, and patients gravitate to the largely aesthetically oriented magazines especially *New Beauty*.

#### OVERALL IMPRESSION: THIS IS AN AESTHETICS PRACTICE

A perhaps more subtle aspect of making the right impression, points out Dr. Pozner, is the appearance of the doctors and other staff members.

The attire of the doctors is part of this, he says, noting that although in some parts of the country physicians are expected to wear suits and ties, this is not in the case in any of his offices, where physicians wear clean white jackets — surgeons wear scrubs — but not ties, “which can carry dirt and germs.”

He believes that aesthetic specialists should be held to a higher standard than other specialists in terms of other aspects of their appearance. “Men should have trim fingernails; women should have attractive nails — whether or not they are polished. And everyone should brush their teeth “especially after eating tuna or drinking coffee.” ■