

COMMENTARY

Imaging Modality Is a Valuable Adjunct

Complexion analysis system improves patient care and makes good business sense

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Dermatology consultations have come a long way from the Woods lamp and hand mirror. Today's medical imaging systems provide extraordinary new capabilities in detecting and displaying skin conditions. These systems can isolate the most subtle imperfections and extend the range of vision beyond the visible to see the underlying causes of virtually any condition that our technology can treat. Unlike patients and physicians, these systems are entirely objective.

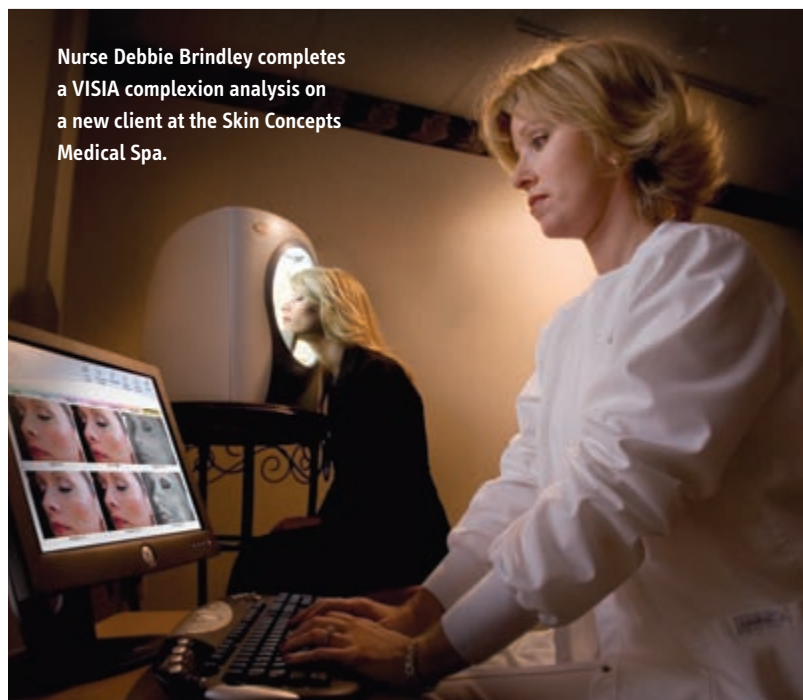
At the Laser Skin and Vein Center of Virginia in Virginia Beach, we provide a full range of laser and cosmetic dermatology surgery services. In the adjacent Skin Concepts Medical spa we offer medical and aesthetic dermatology services as well as medically supervised skin care programs. Additionally, at the Institute of Anti-Aging Research, we study aging, new cosmeceuticals, laser, and anti-aging therapies. Common to all these operations is the extensive, carefully directed use of modern imaging systems.

The centerpiece of both our practice and medical spa is the VISIA Complexion Analysis System from Canfield Imaging Systems. With this system, we can capture, analyze, and quantify up to eight different aspects of the patient's facial complexion, including subsurface blood vessels and hyperpigmented sun damage using their new RBX analysis technology. Canfield's Mirror Software provides the image database and visual communication tools that tie all of our digital imaging systems together. With all of our patient images stored on a central server, they are accessible by Mirror from any PC in the practice or spa. We use NexTech software to further integrate the imaging with scheduling.

We use VISIA imaging in several ways. When a new patient arrives, a nurse performs the initial VISIA imaging session, and prints two copies of the skin analysis on glossy photo paper. Before I see the patient, I review their medical history from the sheets they've filled out and learn about their concerns. I also have a copy of the VISIA analysis, which I read like a lab report, so I have a pretty good idea of what I'm going to see even before I meet the patient. I then meet with patients, examine them, and establish relationships.

As we get to the point of discussing a treatment plan, I'll call up their images on a flat panel monitor mounted on the wall. Using a wireless mouse, I can move through the different screens and, with a laser pointer, show them areas for treatment. If needed, I can simulate the outcome of potential treatments as a visual aid to the discussion. After we've agreed on a treatment plan, the nurse gives them one copy of the VISIA analysis to take home and the other copy is filed in the patient chart.

High quality imaging is particularly valuable when we are treating patients with such therapies as



Nurse Debbie Brindley completes a VISIA complexion analysis on a new client at the Skin Concepts Medical Spa.

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fractional resurfacing, IPL, GentleWaves LED, radio frequency skin tightening, and the like. In many cases, improvement comes in small increments. Unlike treatments such as Botox, the patient does not see an immediate dramatic improvement, and may feel as if the treatment isn't working. Therefore, we have the patient return typically in three to six months for a free second VISIA evaluation. During the consultations, I bring up the before-and-after images side by side on the monitor and let patients see for themselves how much improvement there has been. Although it's rarely necessary, I can also point out where the treatments have improved their appearance.

There are a number of benefits to using imaging in this way. In the best case, the patient sees the side by side comparison, is immediately pleased with the improvement, goes home happy and tells all her friends. For patients not totally pleased with their progress, we are able to have a productive discussion about why their expectations were not met and agree on a touch up or follow up that is acceptable to all parties. This helps avoid unnecessary treatments, and improves patient satisfaction. In those rare cases where patients remain unsatisfied, our photo imaging provides excellent documentation to help resolve any issues. In all of these cases, VISIA helps provide great patient care but also makes good business sense.

Beyond the direct benefits to our practice and business, consistent use of patient imaging has made me a better doctor and usually a better researcher and consultant. By providing continuous feedback, it is a learning process for me, enabling me to observe results over time and across patients that otherwise would have been impossible to see. By observing how certain

anatomic areas, techniques, or device settings respond to treatments, I have been able to improve my techniques and refine my treatment plans. I use images of acne bacteria porphyrins to guide my decision for acne therapy and the use of antibiotics. It has been my most effective way to encourage good skin habits and avoid tanning beds and use sunscreens. Even if I wasn't doing any cosmetic procedures at all, VISIA would be worthwhile as an educational tool. Equally as important, it improves my ability to determine which patients are better or poorer candidates for a given treatment.

The VISIA imaging sessions have proven to be extremely popular both with my patients and staff. It gives the nurses a chance to interact with new patients, and the patients are really intrigued with the experience. While patients sometimes come in feeling discouraged about their appearance, seeing positive photographic results of their treatments is a great encouragement for them. Because the pictures are so nicely done, I use them for teaching seminars and medical school lectures, national meetings and photo albums for the waiting room.

Dermatologists may look at something like a VISIA and they think it would be nice to have, but it won't generate money and can't pay for itself. While it may not generate money directly, like a laser, it has enormous value in providing the visual communications that support my research, practice, and educational activities.

In addition to his affiliation with the Laser Skin and Vein Center of Virginia in Virginia Beach, Dr. McDaniel is assistant professor of clinical dermatology and plastic surgery Eastern Virginia Medical School in Virginia Beach.