

## Generation Zap

Millennial-friendly skin clinics are competing with doctors' offices as the go-to place for laser facials and cosmetic injections. Is it the way of the future—or a brow-furrowing cause for concern?



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THREE FLOORS ABOVE A Navy recruitment office in a nondescript Tribeca building, a bas-relief sculpture of gilded twin Buddhas presides over sleek white seating. The ambience is Venice Beach bungalow meets medical practice—which is exactly how Lauren Abramowitz imagined the flagship location of Park Avenue Skin Solutions. One treatment room, where the 41-year-old licensed physician’s assistant provides cosmetic services—including Botox and filler injections, microneedling, and IV vitamin infusions, as well as laser and light therapies—features a peacock-feather dream catcher and exposed brick; another showcases a neon unicorn head flanked by a hashtag and the universal syringe emoji. “It symbolizes a magical experience,” she says without a hint of sarcasm.

Abramowitz is one of several practitioners wooing a generation that has come of age in the era of blow-out bars, and now expects similar convenience from cosmetic services usually offered within the doctor’s office. The lure of a more laid-back environment persuaded Nandita Khanna, 37, to try Facile’s Pasadena location, where board-certified dermatologist Nancy Samolitis, M.D., practices. Khanna, the editorial projects director at Goop, had never tried injections. But at Facile, the Starbucks-style menu is easy to understand. “The prices are all there, so you know what you’re signing up for,” explains Khanna. And the extensive initial consult with Lena Metcalfe, P.A., was reassuring. “She said, ‘Tell me what you like about yourself.’ ” The day after Khanna’s procedures, Metcalfe called to check on her, a courtesy one might not get from a celebrity derm with a jam-packed schedule.

Natasha Roberts, 30, whose New York–based agency The Know represents artists, found similar comfort in Abramowitz’s ultra-personalized care. “I don’t have any other skin-related issues, so I didn’t feel the need to get my Botox at a dermatologist’s office.”

Macrene Alexiades, M.D., Ph.D., would advise otherwise. “These are still medical procedures,” says Alexiades, a Manhattan dermatologist. “There is

no comparison at the level of expertise and safety when you're in the hands of a physician." It's rare, she continues, but "you can get Botox injected in the wrong place and end up with paralysis or even death." Also, she argues, there is quite a bit of fraudulent material at less reputable spas. Counterfeit Botox and filler? It's a thing, she insists. (Beware the \$50 vials of "Juvéderm.") Deanne Mraz Robinson, M.D., co-owner, with Rhonda Klein, M.D., of Modern Dermatology, a boutique practice in Westport, Connecticut, agrees: "Something as seemingly safe as filler can potentially cause blindness if injected incorrectly." If you are curious to try an aesthetics bar, she says, make sure to seek one out with a board-certified dermatologist on staff.

The American Academy of Dermatology's official stance is that any medical procedure—including those that use an FDA-regulated device (e.g., a laser or sculpting probe)—should be done by a properly trained physician, or a non-physician under the on-site supervision of a doctor, in accordance with any local, state, or federal laws. A med spa, or a practice like Park Avenue Skin Solutions, should, in turn, have a medical adviser. (It does; her name is Erica Walters, M.D. She is in residence two to three days a week, and her online bio—complete with moving gif—credits her as being board-certified in both emergency and aesthetic medicine.) The problem, Alexiades points out, is that there are doctors who get paid to be on retainer "who have never set foot in the place." (A good question to ask: Is the medical director practicing on-site?) Still, high-end aestheticians are building up their client rosters based on the idea of mastery: Theirs is a craft that is honed by doing cosmetics—and only cosmetics—over and over again.

"I obviously feel strongly about focusing on one thing," says Alli Webb, the Drybar founder, who frequents Alchemy 43, an aesthetics-bar chain with four locations in Los Angeles. "There is that kind of ease when you go in, knowing that that's all they do" (as opposed to a traditional derm, who is also focused on things like skin-cancer screenings and surgeries). Webb is now an investor in the company, which counts Forerunner Ventures' Eurie Kim as a board member. "Beauty is undergoing massive innovation and consumer-behavior change," Kim explains, noting that Alchemy 43 brings the beauty routine "out from behind closed doors." The nod to transparency is a boon for customers looking for a more seamless experience, or a younger client base that "has always been curious," she says. Now they can embark on that quest from millennial-pink waiting rooms—where the WiFi is fast and the matcha flows freely.—FLORENCE KANE