

member profile

FOREVER
LASER
INSTITUT



*Integrating 'Slow
and Sustainable
Beauty' in Aesthetic
Medicine*

Aesthetic medicine was born with the introduction of medical lasers in the late 1980s. Switzerland-based dermatologist Dr. Luigi Polla embraced the practice, specializing

BY GIANNINA SMITH BEDFORD

in laser therapy and, later, in injections of Botox and fillers, becoming one of the first European doctors to integrate this new approach in his dermatological practice. In 1997, with a decade of experience in private practice dermatology under his belt, Dr. Polla—along with his wife, Barbara, also an MD with specialization in internal medicine—transformed his dermatology practice into the first European medical spa. This was the birth of Forever Laser Institut.

"[Aesthetic medicine] is all about soft medical procedures in the field of aesthetics. Treatments in that field are quick, non-invasive with minor downtime and very little risk," Dr. Polla says.



Forever Laser Institut founder Dr. Luigi Polla (above) opted to embrace a modern and high-tech design for his medical spa, in keeping with the spa's high-tech approach to beauty.

"Medical aesthetic doctors have become something like modern shrinks; patients trust them with their desires, insecurities and needs, requiring a global vision and response from their doctors."



The Spa

Walk into the nearly 6,600-square-foot Forever Laser Institut on upscale Rue du Rhône in Geneva, Switzerland and you will see why the medical spa attracts a discerning clientele. Contemporary architecture, clean lines and the corporate colors of orange, green and purple combine to create a luxurious ambiance that is both high-tech yet inviting.

"Dr. Luigi Polla and his wife integrated their passion for art by decorating Forever Laser Institut with important pieces by leading contemporary artists," says Guillaume Varone, spa director.

With services ranging from facial and body treatments to injections, the medical spa's most popular treatments are laser hair removal, Botox and peels.

The price tags for these treatments range from 130 CHF (about \$140) for a glycolic peel to 4,000 CHF (about \$4,360) for a fractional Laser treatment, also known as Fraxel, which helps to repair fine lines, wrinkles, acne, surgical scars and pigmented lesions due to sun damage. Other specialized treatments include aquarejuvenation, which combines micro-dermabrasion and hydrotherapy to treat dull skin and pigmented lesions, as well as injections of Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) where a patient's blood is used to produce plasma enriched with platelets, growth factors and stem cells to reduce wrinkles and dark circles.

"Forever Laser Institut offers the most cutting-edge aesthetic treatments by

having a team of doctors and therapists with complementary experience and by offering avant-garde technology and devices, many which are not available elsewhere in Switzerland," Dr. Polla says.

Personalized Care

Along with its medical-focused treatments, Forever Laser Institut retails a skin-care brand developed by Dr. Polla and his wife called Alchimie Forever. Aimed at combining the "best of science with the best of nature," Alchimie Forever's antioxidant products are 100 percent made in Switzerland. As a biomedical researcher focused on antioxidants, cellular stress and anti-aging technologies, Barbara is the driving force behind the creations of the brand.

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FASTFACTS

According to Dr. Polla, a growing number of his clients favor less invasive aesthetic treatments like laser therapy, fillers and Botox injections over drastic, one-off treatments like plastic surgery. He calls this movement "slow and sustainable beauty" where there is strong emphasis on long-term maintenance and subtle physical enhancement.



"The brand was tailor-made for our clientele's demands and blends our medical approach to aesthetics with a more natural approach to ingredients and results," says Ada Polla, CEO of Alchimie Forever and the couple's eldest daughter. "Other brands we chose as complementary (in the spa) are Mené & Moy, Céllex-C, La Roche-Posay, Avène and Lucia Rapetti for body care."

The Client

Boasting a clientele that is largely 30- to 65-year-old professionals, approximately 85 percent of the spa's clients are women and 15 percent men. Dr. Polla says Forever Laser Institut serves individuals from all social classes and receives many international clients from English-speaking countries as well as the Middle East, particularly during the summer. To accommodate its multi-lingual clientele, a majority of the spa staff speaks French, German, Italian and English.

With a reputation for delivering high-

level expertise in the field of aesthetic medicine, Forever Laser Institut garners many clients from personal recommendations and word-of-mouth. A frequent contributor to articles and interviews, Dr. Polla's expertise has also helped gain exposure for the spa. He says when clients arrive at the doors of Forever Laser Institut many look for expert knowledge in a variety of techniques and seek non-invasive treatments that are painless and offer natural results.

"They expect rapid, visible results, they like quick treatments, but with a personalized approach and a constant follow-up," he says. "They are well informed and want the newest techniques and technologies on the market."

To cater to its dedicated clientele, Forever Laser Institut recently launched a "members" club called Club Forever. Although the program is still in the process of being defined, its goal is to increase revenue per client and encourage word-of-mouth, Ada says.

Business Strategy

Forever Laser Institut's good reputation is bolstered by a marketing budget of nearly 200'000 CHF (about \$218,078) per year. The budget is allocated into print advertising, online advertising and events. Although these promotions help attract new clients, one of the spa's most effective business strategies is internal cross-selling.

"We love to work to increase the revenue per client. We have found this less costly than acquiring new clients," Varone says.

Since inception, Forever Laser Institut has seen about a 10 percent growth in annual revenue each year. The spa is using its success to improve operations and is constantly making investments in equipment, new devices and training.

"We continually invest in new devices in order to continue to be pioneers in the field of aesthetic medicine," Varone says. "Travels to conferences and training sessions are also a significant

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investment [and] we recently invested in a new software program.”

With its growth and success, Forever Laser Institut is constantly working to ensure consistent quality of service and treatments. In such a large, multi-disciplinary team, this can sometimes be a challenge. Varone says the spa focuses on training team members to deliver high-level service and gathers feedback from clients to see where improvements can be made. When hiring team members, Forever Laser Institut first turns to word-of-mouth to find qualified candidates.

“For administrative positions, we have found that targeted ads are also very effective,” Varone adds.

Future Plans

As Forever Laser Institut looks toward the future, the spa is analyzing markets in various parts of the world for possible expansion, although nothing has been decided yet. In the more immediate future, the medical spa is taking on two new doctors—plastic surgeon Dr. Luc Botter and aesthetic medicine specialist Dr. Sandrine Gept-Locher.

“We are therefore adapting our treatment rooms to allow for the new medical approaches and procedures they will be introducing,” says Ada. She adds that investment in the best new technologies has been constant since Forever Laser Institut’s opening, mostly as a result of Dr. Polla’s frequent travels to attend numerous congresses and meetings of interest in aesthetic medicine.

Industry Trends

As a trailblazer in the medical spa indus-



try in Switzerland, Forever Laser Institut’s leadership keeps its finger on the pulse of developing spa trends. The idea of “slow and sustainable beauty,” a concept coined by Dr. Polla where clients are encouraged to embrace non-invasive but regular aesthetic programs versus drastic, one-off treatments like plastic surgery, is one movement that is growing among his clients. He also sees the spa industry moving towards a multi-medical approach, integrating the expertise of doctors with different specializations in treatments. As the relationship between the medical field and industry of aesthetics continues to grow, he believes that more individuals now realize that being healthy and looking good goes hand-in-hand. New techniques and devices in medical aesthetics are changing in reaction to these trends and working to treat patients’ ailments with more than just prescriptions.

“Medical aesthetic doctors have become something like modern shinks; patients trust them with their desires, insecurities and needs, requiring a global vision and response from their doctors,” Dr. Polla says. “We are talking about a long-term relationship between the patient

and the doctor. With adapted and personalized treatment programs, a medical spa has the ability to improve an individual’s health as well as appearance.” ■

ABOUT THE SPA

Spa type: Medical spa

Spa open date: 1997

Space in square footage: About 6,500 square feet

Number of treatment rooms: 17

Interior designer: Greek artist and architect Andreas Angelidakis

Number of full-time spa staff: Around 20 (four receptionists, three doctors, two nurses, eight beauticians-therapists, one accountant, one marketing, one client coordinator, one cleaning-maintenance, one spa director)

Method of staff compensation: Fixed salary and percentage on turnover (revenues) and sales (cosmetic products)

Staff training: Partially internal and external (eg. laser hair removal, specific massage techniques)

Annual budget for marketing: 200,000 CHF (about \$218,078)

Guest ratio (women vs. men): 85 percent vs. 15 percent

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