

Let's Take Back Our Industry

Our new columnist, Emma Ryall, proprietor of Zest Clinic in Swords, Dublin, wonders if social media has us taking advice from the wrong people...



As we all can attest, becoming a beauty therapist is no walk in the park. Courses are in-depth and intensive, requiring detailed knowledge of the body's systems, while an abundance of postgraduate courses encourage continual education and advancement.

From all this education and training, we have gained significant knowledge, vast amounts of relevant skills, formed our ideas and opinions, even perhaps carried out our own clinical trials – yet so often all of this is thrown out the window in favour of the opinion of a beauty blogger or vlogger.

Irish bloggers can reportedly make up to €3,000 per Instagram post, while larger influencers, such as a Kardashian, can roll in up to \$500,000 per post. Such is their influence on the general public, who rush off to purchase a particular product just because their favourite 'influencer' has said they use it.

But from our point of view this can represent a real problem. How many times in a skin consultation have you learned that your client sabotaged their skin by using the incorrect products solely because they observed a blogger or vlogger doing so? Brands are looking to sell more by bringing influencers onboard, and in theory, there's nothing wrong with that.

But what happens when someone buys a product that isn't suitable for their skin, applies it and doesn't get the results she wants – and worse, may have a negative reaction? Nobody wins.

In this case, a qualified skin specialist would be able to assess the client's skin and advise a product that will actually suit her skin and gain the results she wants. The client would be happy with the clinical endpoint and the brand upholds its level of excellence with yet again another happy customer. Win-win.

En masse, we need to tune back into that central nervous system that we spent months learning about and ask ourselves why are we falling weak at the knees for someone who generally is not even in our industry when we collectively have the greater knowledge and understanding? These should be the preferred brand ambassadors.

But again, ethics is key. I have witnessed many therapists cross over to the glistening side of social media to promote products that perhaps have conflicting ingredients or are just ineffective. It seems, for some, the flash of cash and boost

in followers is more attractive than the code of ethics and knowledge they once learned.

Within the industry, I am a square peg in a round hole. I firmly believe education is key and morals and ethics must play a role in everything you do. Across the board, standards have dropped, and we are currently at the curvature, with light at the end of the tunnel.

Gone are the days when a therapist's job description stopped at painting nails and tweezing eyebrows. With the surge of skin clinics and skin specialists nationwide, a parallel surge of people craving education is apparent. Clients want to know more; therapists want to learn more; clinics want to offer more.

Presently, bloggers in Ireland are joining forces to fight against online trolls and bullying. I 100 per cent stand by them. Keyboard warriors are one of the worst forms of bullies. However, I say: let's take back our industry. Let's join forces, come together, educate one another, support one another and stop being a sheep to the next 'insta hun'. Worship those who know and those who care rather than those who benefit.

Emma Ryall is the proprietor of Aesthetic Training Academy Ireland (ATAI) and Zest Skin Clinic located in Swords. Phone 01 890 2441 (Zest) and 01 524 1511 (ATAI)