

Today's Dermatology Practice:
Balancing Patient Experience with Increased Efficiency





Introduction

As dermatologists look for ways to enhance patient care and take advantage of opportunities for growth, there is growing interest in solutions that can help them continue to provide the best care and outcomes possible, without negatively impacting efficiency or the patient experience.

This white paper is designed to provide dermatologists an understanding of how they can balance the need to create a pleasing and inviting patient experience with the demand to be more efficient. Viewing the dermatology procedure room and the equipment in it as a whole can help blend both needs without compromising one for the other.

Focusing on Greater Efficiency

Within the dermatology industry, there has long been a strong appreciation for blending the principles of beauty and aesthetics with the desire to provide quality care. This is evident in the look and feel of the offices and the attention put on patient satisfaction. Great care has been taken to create brand identities and cohesive patient experiences built on a foundation of aesthetics and patient comfort.

However, a number of factors are impacting the dermatology industry and putting pressure on dermatologists to now put more focus on increasing efficiencies, including these three:

Industry consolidation: Similar to how traditional physician-owned practices have been disappearing, **the same has been occurring with dermatology practices**; but at a slower pace. However, this trend has been increasing the last few years as practices either partner with others or are acquired by other dermatologists or private equity firms. With this consolidation comes increased pressure for continued growth and cost cutting without diminishing the customer experience.

Changing patient demographics: As the population lives longer, the percentage of older adults visiting dermatologists is increasing. **As of 2013, 42 percent of dermatology patients were 60 years or older and 68 percent were 40 years and or older.** While some of this is leading to growing demand for aesthetic procedures that promote youth and vitality, it is also causing a rise in the treatments and procedures related to skin cancers, as well as for **conditions associated with aging skin**, such as actinic (photo) damage, pruritus, eczematous dermatitis, purpura, and venous insufficiency.



Shortage of dermatologists: The increase in the number of patients, along with growing demand for aesthetic and clinical procedures, is putting a strain on the current pool of dermatologists. The growth rate of practitioners is not aligned with demand, forcing many practices to learn to do more with fewer dermatologists. [The American Medical Association expects the ratio of dermatologists to the U.S. population to continue to decrease over time, particularly in rural areas of the country.](#) In many cases, this will extend wait times for appointments, which could negatively impact patient satisfaction and care provided.

Developing a Balanced Approach

While the pressure to be more efficient has been growing in recent years, there have always been dermatologists who excelled at increasing throughput to maximize revenue. Just as there have been dermatologists who catered more to aesthetic procedures and focused efforts on enhancing patient experience.

The difference now is that many in the industry are realizing that it does not have to be an “either-or approach,” but rather a balanced approach that places equal weight on patient experience and increased efficiency as a way to grow the practice and provide better quality patient care.

The challenge is being able to balance experiential qualities such as inviting environments, pleasing aesthetics, safety and comfort with efficient qualities such as minimal wait times, high room utilization, enhanced workflow and access to supplies.

Similar to dermatology practices, traditional physician practices are also struggling with this dilemma. To a certain extent, physician practices and clinics have historically placed more emphasis on increasing efficiencies. It is only recently, in large part driven by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and a shift toward value-based reimbursement programs, that physician practices have attempted to place equal emphasis on efficiency and the patient experience.

The key to successfully developing a balance is adopting a patient-centered approach that views the clinical space, procedure rooms and caregiver-patient interaction as part of the point of care ecosystem. The point of care ecosystem encompasses the direct interaction between patients and caregivers, as well as processes, equipment and other interactions within the practice or clinic that could impact the patient experience and efficiency levels. (For more information on the point of care ecosystem, visit Midmark’s [content and news library](#).)

Adopting a patient-centered approach provides a framework for placing equal emphasis on the patient experience and increased efficiency. It helps keep patient experience and interaction top-of-mind as opportunities for efficiency gains are considered and implemented, and vice versa. It also helps dermatologists view the procedure room, the equipment and the entire practice as a point of care ecosystem where everything has an impact on the overall patient experience and efficiency of the practice.

Achieving Balance with the Right Equipment

Having the right equipment in your procedure room can help ensure a balanced approach that enhances patient experience and increases efficiency. Following are key elements within the procedure room and how they help enhance patient experience and increase efficiency.

PROCEDURE ROOM DESIGN

While technically not a piece of equipment, the design and layout of the procedure room is one of the most important foundational elements in the practice. Since this is the area where patients and dermatologists spend most of their time, having the right layout and configuration can help strike the right balance of efficiency and experience. The procedure room should integrate consultation, counseling and treatment all within a seamless atmosphere.

Enhances Patient Experience:

- Inviting environment helps patients feel comfortable and safe while also taking into consideration patient privacy.
- Decluttered environment with equipment and supplies stored out of sight until needed, provides the room with a non-clinical look and feel.
- Correctly configured room accommodates wheelchair turnaround.
- Consultation and family/visitor zone designed around idea of shared communication between caregiver, patient and family members.

Increases Efficiency:

- Size of the room large enough to comfortably accommodate patients and caregivers and allows exams and procedures to be properly performed.
- Procedure chair position within the room gives dermatologists easy access around the entire chair.
- Configuration and size of room allows versatility for introduction of new equipment and in-office procedures, as well as future growth.
- Ability to bring equipment and supplies to the patient when needed and return to previously stowed position declutters room and enhances workflows.

PROCEDURE CHAIRS

The primary focal point of the dermatology office is the procedure chair. This patient positioning device allows dermatologists to efficiently deliver quality patient care while offering comfort. The ideal procedure chair for a balanced approach is one that offers the functionality of a clinical device while offering various comfort design elements of a chair.

Enhances Patient Experience:

- Movement along 4 axes provides flexibility needed to achieve maximum comfort and relaxation.
- Low height of 17 to 19 inches allows patient to access chair with little to no assistance, increasing patient comfort and protecting patient dignity.
- More natural “chair-like” position takes pressure off of the head and neck and keeps patients comfortable during procedures.

Increases Efficiency:

- Chair movement gives dermatologists unobstructed access to patients and a clear view of the procedure site while remaining in the proper ergonomic working position.
- Power height, back, foot and tilt allow dermatologists to quickly and precisely move patients into the most effective position for a wide range of procedures.
- Built-in rotation lets dermatologists move patients to the treatment device instead of requiring devices or physicians to move.

MOBILE WORKSTATIONS

Today’s dermatologists need workstations that provide the flexibility to support the integration of technology, such as electronic medical records (EMR) and tablets, within the procedure room while helping improve the caregiver-patient interaction. These workstations enable organizations to easily bring digital information to the point of care without sacrificing workflow or negatively impacting the caregiver or patient experience.

Enhances Patient Experience:

- Mobile workstations facilitate the sharing of information, enhancing patient interaction and education.
- Adjustable workstations allow dermatologists to maintain a proper working position without sacrificing eye contact with the patient.
- Flexible movement provides access to all patient data right at the point of care.

Increases Efficiency:

- Mobility provides flexibility for rooms to be easily customized and space-saving measures to be taken.
- Workstation coverings and finishes minimize work surface seams, enhancing cleaning and infection control processes.
- Flexibility enables dermatologists to integrate technology without putting strain on patient-caregiver interaction.

CASEWORK/CABINETS

Casework designed specifically for medical environments, such as procedure rooms, is often more durable and will not break down under medical use, unlike common wood casework. To help reach a balance, it is important to have casework that offers multiple style options while being flexible and durable enough to meet the highly specialized needs of clinical work.

Enhances Patient Experience:

- Styling options allow dermatologists to create a consistent brand while establishing a warm, inviting environment.
- Proper height levels for sinks and base cabinets ensure accessibility for patients.
- Easy-to-clean seamless design and antimicrobial pulls and surfaces help protect patients from infections.

Increases Efficiency:

- Durable casework withstands demands of medical environment.
- Modular design allows caregivers to easily configure workspace components to fit workflow and maximize space.
- Pull-out writing surface allows paperwork needed during visit to be readily available.

LIGHTING

It is important to have the right medical lighting in the procedure room. The combination of an ideal color temperature and ample brightness ensures dermatologists are able to correctly assess tissue color variances during procedures. The lighting should have a large pattern size with an even distribution of light throughout that eliminates shadows.

Enhances Patient Experience:

- LED lighting is safe and cool to the touch.
- Adequate lighting increases patient's confidence in practitioner's ability to see clearly and accurately during procedures.
- Smooth range of motion for positioning helps eliminate the need to move or reposition patients during procedures and creates a highly professional and polished interaction.

Increases Efficiency:

- LED technology, which is more energy-efficient than its halogen predecessor, does not require periodic bulb replacement.
- Counterbalanced lighting is easy to maneuver and provides precise positioning without drifting.
- Large reflector provides an even distribution of light and reduction of shadows for uninterrupted illumination.

MIDMARK EQUIPMENT FOR A BALANCED APPROACH

- **Midmark 630 HUMANFORM® Procedure Chair** is designed to complement the human body with more natural movement and enhanced positioning capabilities.
- **Midmark 641 Barrier-Free® Power Procedure Chair** provides unobstructed access to the patient's head and neck area so practitioners can work more efficiently and comfortably.
- **Ritter 255 LED Procedure Light** is designed to deliver superior, quality illumination while enhancing the ability to see color variations in skin tissue.
- **Synthesis® Casework** brings together style and functionality that helps establish a unique brand while being flexible and durable enough to meet the needs of clinical work.
- **Midmark Care Exchange®** workstations provide the flexibility to integrate technology where and how it is needed, no matter the hardware platform or location in the facility.





Conclusion

As dermatologists feel increasingly pressured to improve efficiencies within their practice, it is important they adopt a balanced approach to efficiency gains and the patient experience. Balancing patient experience with efficiency requires a new way to think about the practice. Developing a patient-centric view that fosters an understanding of the point of care ecosystem provides a framework for considering the right equipment at the point of care to ensure a balance that can ultimately have an impact on patient satisfaction and outcomes.

