

Managing Pain and Anxiety for Patient Wellness

By Cindy J. Papp, Contributing Editor

Patient wellness is a multifaceted concept that has garnered increased awareness in aesthetics as providers recognize the profound connection between physical appearance and overall well-being. This holistic approach aims to address not only the cosmetic needs of clients but also their mental, emotional and physical health. Importantly, providers are considering the role pain and anxiety management play in comprehensive patient care, not only to enhance the overall patient experience but also to contribute to the success of therapeutic interventions.

Whole Patient Care

Weight control, sexual health and peptide therapies are just some of the treatments crossing over from wellness into the aesthetics arena, allowing providers to care for the whole patient. They are also adding strategies to treatment protocols to help manage patient anxiety and pain as part of their patient wellness plans, and Pro-Nox™ (CAREstream America; Lake Mary, Fla.) is driving the trend.

Pro-Nox is a non-narcotic, fast-acting system that provides a 50:50 fixed mixture of nitrous oxide and oxygen to help reduce patient anxiety and increase comfort using an advanced delivery system controlled by the patient. Nitrous oxide has long been used as a safe anxiolytic that increases the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin to inhibit pain signaling and reduce anxiety. With a quick onset and short recovery time, patients can use this pain relief tool for the duration of their treatment to improve comfort and satisfaction.

“For so long we have had topical numbing creams that, unfortunately, do not reduce pain enough because cream absorption depth does not reach where most energy is delivered,” reported Mona Greene, MSN, NP, clinical director for Pro-Nox Aesthetics. “Cooling chillers try to distract patients from the pain. Oral pain and anxiety medications

prevent patients from driving themselves home and the effects typically last longer than the treatment time. Pro-Nox not only helps diminish the pain but also helps patients feel relaxed, and it is completely out of their system within seven to ten minutes after they stop inhaling,” she explained.

While there is no way to measure the levels of dopamine and serotonin in the brain, nitrous oxide is a proven and documented anxiolytic with published information about its calming effect, according to Ms. Greene. As patients experience less pain with a greater capacity to relax, clinicians can deliver more energy for better clinical outcomes without having to coach patients through the treatment or compromise efficacy.

Better Comfort, Better Outcomes

Cosmetic dermatologist Mitchel Goldman, MD, founder and director of Cosmetic Laser Dermatology (San Diego, Calif.) reported that he uses Pro-Nox with numerous treatments including radiofrequency (RF) microneedling, intense pulsed light treatments, sclerotherapy of leg and chest veins and long-pulsed 1064 Nd:YAG treatment of periorbital reticular veins. Dr. Goldman also noted that he is able to treat at higher energy levels.

“Patients breeze through the painful treatments without much complaint,” stated Dr. Goldman. “A more compliant patient will not move around as much or demand that you stop treatment half-way through to take a ‘break’ for an otherwise painful treatment,” he said. “Patients are less anxious and more likely to return for additional treatments knowing that it is so easy without much pain.” According to Dr. Goldman, Pro-Nox is an improved option for his patients over certain medications, as the effects of oral benzodiazepines and other narcotics may last hours and lead to nausea.

Ms. Greene believes that managing patient pain and anxiety should be a



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principal goal for aesthetic practices. “All practitioners understand the importance of patients returning for necessary additional treatments,” she stated, adding that increased comfort could lead to patient interest in additional aesthetic procedures and wellness treatments offered by the provider. “Well-managed patients will not only come back to these practices but will also tell their friends how well they were taken care of and become social media ambassadors to the practice,” she added.

“I’ve been using Pro-Nox since 2018. It has become so busy in the office that we now have two units, which are used all day long,” reported Joel L. Cohen, MD, FAAD, FACMS, director of AboutSkin Dermatology & Aesthetics (Greenwood Village, Colo.). “My wife is a big Pro-Nox fan, and she says it keeps peace in our house when she does procedures.”

Dr. Cohen complements many of his treatments with Pro-Nox, including HALO® hybrid fractional laser (Sciton; Palo Alto, Calif.); platelet-rich plasma scalp injections; fractional RF on the face for acne scars and on the neck, knees and abdomen for laxity; ablative laser resurfacing as well as laser-enabled coring; and sometimes skin cancer surgery. “Pretty much every big laser resurfacing treatment gets Pro-Nox before regional nerve block anesthesia and then maintenance dosing during the treatment,” he explained. “It definitely helps manage patient wellness because you can decrease patient anxiety and make their overall experience much better.”

“Prior to nerve blocks, I have patients do a loading dose of seven to ten deep breaths,” Dr. Cohen continued. “Maintenance dosing during treatments can be helpful, and it can also be used post procedure, such as after laser resurfacing until the heat dissipates.”

Pro-Nox in Context

Dr. Cohen reported that he is currently using Pro-Nox during treatments for an eight-year-old child with extensive traumatic scars. “The patient was mauled by a lion while on safari in Africa and has extensive scarring on her arm after the injury and subsequent tendon transfer reconstruction. For this young patient’s scars, I am using a vascular laser, a non-ablative fractional laser and an ablative fractional laser as well as injections to decrease scar thickness, to increase her range of motion and to improve the overall cosmetic appearance. All of these procedures are associated with anxiety and discomfort, so we use Pro-Nox routinely for her treatments.”

From nutritional guidance and stress-reduction therapies to personalized skincare regimens and body contouring, incorporating health and wellness measures within aesthetic services underscores the importance of a comprehensive, client-centered approach to beauty and self-care.

“We live in a fast-paced, always-connected environment and there is an increasing need to promote health and wellness,” Ms. Greene commented. “Taking care of the whole patient with aesthetic and wellness treatments is the direction many practices are taking, and Pro-Nox is an integral part of this trend as it provides a complete wellness experience.”

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