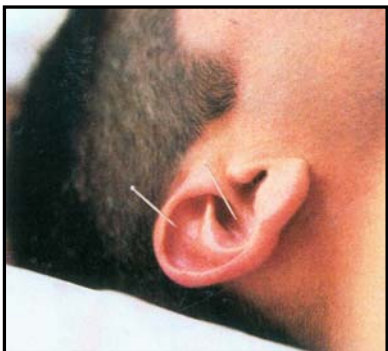


*Licensed acupuncturist Charles Yarborough explains why some spas are embracing this ancient Chinese medical technique.*

Nowadays, many modern full-service spas offer state-of-the-art cosmetic and medical procedures. But ancient, exotic therapies also remain appealing to clients. With roots that extend thousands of years into the past, acupuncture continues to draw fans with its proven effectiveness.

What can acupuncture add to the spa experience? Many spa enthusiasts, in their pursuit of enhanced beauty and relaxation, enjoy the health benefits of this ancient art. Their spa visits may include a session with a practitioner for help with depression, pain relief, stress reduction, or weight control. Acupuncturists may even help clients heal more rapidly after invasive medical procedures. Another increasingly popular spa feature is cosmetic acupuncture, which has garnered celebrity endorsements and favorable reviews. “Patients are coming to me with real medical issues and are interested in living better, healthier lives,” says Nathan Anderson, L. Ac., an acupuncturist at **Humble Abode Spa** in Los Angeles. It’s rewarding to see how well Chinese medicine works.”



At the **Tiffani Kim Institute** in Chicago, clients can choose from a menu that includes acupuncture, computerized complexion analysis, medical-grade microdermabrasion, and other modalities. “As practitioners, our understanding of other modalities expands our abilities to help our clients,” says Ryan Lombardo, L. Ac., the Institute’s director of cosmetic medicine. “Whether our clients come to the Institute looking for vascular surgery, a luxurious facial, a customized nutritional plan, or an acupuncture treatment, we can fulfill those needs.”

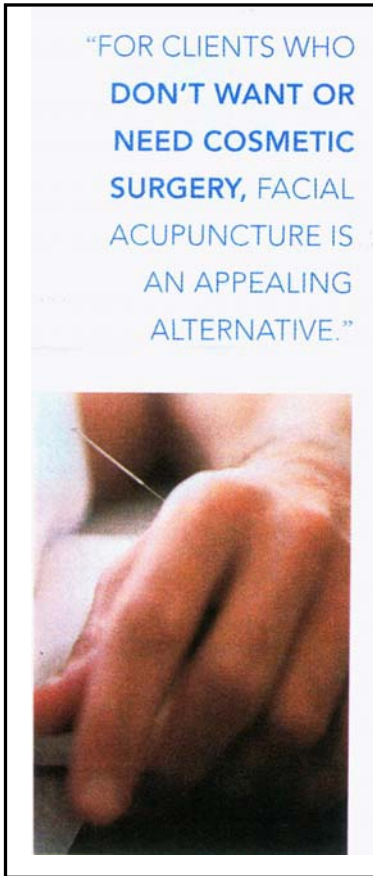
Some critics may view acupuncture’s expansion into the spa venue as worrisome, citing the sanctity of this ancient art and voicing concern about the complications involved in performing it. But Lombardo says that by emphasizing education, both for clients and practitioners, and demanding procedural excellence, acupuncture can become an excellent addition to a spa’s offerings. “Not only do we educate our clients but we are also continually improving and updating our own skills,” he says. “We look at beauty as a multifaceted prism, with the interior—that is to say the state of one’s health—as important as the exterior. Whether it is to help clients stop smoking, manage stress, or shed those last ten pounds, we’re using traditional Chinese medicine to remedy real medical issues. We can even improve clients’ appearances with cosmetic acupuncture.”

### **Cosmetic Acupuncture**

Cosmetic acupuncture has become one of the most frequently requested acupuncture services at many spas because of its proven effectiveness. For clients who don’t want or need cosmetic surgery, facial acupuncture is an appealing alternative. This

process is not intended to replace a facelift or produce instant results (10 treatments are usually advised, followed by periodic tune-ups). However, it can erase fine lines, soften deeper ones, reduce puffy eyes and sagging jowls, and improve skin tone.

Cosmetic acupuncture may sound trendy, but it's based on solid fundamentals of Chinese medicine. Several techniques exist, one of the most effective having been developed by Mary Elizabeth Wakefield, L. Ac. As a teacher of facial acupuncture, Wakefield has trained more than 1,000 acupuncturists who practice at major venues around the world, including Canyon Ranch Spas (Tucson, AZ and Lenox, MA).



Facial acupuncture, she explains, brings nutrients to the cells and stimulates collagen and elastin production. "In Chinese medicine, we'd say we're bringing *qi* and blood to the face," says Wakefield. "Additionally, my students learn to work with facial muscles, which introduces a lifting and toning element. The goal of a treatment, ultimately, is to bring the body back into balance. Sagging features, wrinkling, and hyperpigmentation are all signs that a body is out of balance." She explains that helping clients reclaim their constitutional balance requires an advanced knowledge of acupuncture.

Wakefield stresses that the acupuncturist working in a spa, especially a destination spa, is a special breed of practitioner. "This is a person who is a great communicator," she says. "He or she understands the importance of pampering the patient and is able to customize the treatment accordingly. Patients at the spa, for instance, may be needle-phobic. Here, the acupuncturist must be able to use non-needle modalities to achieve results. It's a completely different experience from working in a medical office. There's an etiquette, a way of dressing, of communicating, a way of being. I call it 'being beauty'."

Wakefield notes that the spa acupuncturist is an accomplished diplomat and is continually engaged in cross-education with estheticians and doctors. Additionally, many spas promote patient education days, in which practitioners lecture to the community. "The spa person has to be very well rounded, and not everybody is cut out to be in a spa environment," says Wakefield. "Those who come to train with me are interested in nurturing, in beauty, and in the journey of transformation. These practitioners are the *crème de la crème*."

In an industry as competitive and rapidly evolving as the spa world, nothing less than the best will do. While adhering to its fundamental principles, acupuncture has given itself a facelift, bringing ancient techniques to the modern pursuit of transformation and renewal—

Charles Yarborough, L. Ac.

*Charles Yarborough, L. Ac., practices acupuncture at Blue Spa in Sherman Oaks, CA, and at his own Pasadena clinic, Hamptons Health Circle. He is also the founder-director of the American Cosmetic Acupuncture Association. For more information on acupuncture or to find a qualified cosmetic acupuncturist in your area, visit [www.americancosmeticacupuncture.com](http://www.americancosmeticacupuncture.com).*