

Talking to...



Sarah Dale

The owner of Sarah Dale Aesthetics in Dorchester tells **Amanda Pauley** about transitioning from nurse to advanced practitioner, treating NHS transgender clients and bridging the gap between beauty and aesthetics

It's not often you meet someone who breaks the industry mould quite like Sarah Dale. The qualified registered general nurse-turned-advanced-practitioner has combined her 23 years of medical experience and passion for non-invasive beauty treatments to rent her own clinic space in Dorchester, helping clients find results-driven solutions to their skincare problems.

The transition from medic to owner of Sarah Dale Aesthetics, situated within The HighBrow Clinic & Aesthetics, was driven by her own skincare struggle. "I've suffered with unwanted hair growth on my chin and upper lip since I was 20 and had to have electrolysis from a young age," she says. "I opened the clinic because it was difficult to find somewhere to treat the issue and I wanted to help others going through the same thing."

The clinic's speciality is hair removal and skin rejuvenation, which Dale trained in with Ellipse, and she has become so well known for these services that she's now working with the NHS to treat transgender clients, tackling a real gap in the market. "We've got five active NHS transgender clients on our books but the referral scheme is ongoing, so we can and will take on more," says Dale.

Approached by the NHS 18 months ago to set up the collaboration, Dale tells me they chose her because "my clinic already had a good reputation among trans clients for giving quality treatments", adding, "One of their clients had heard about us and it was this word-of-mouth recommendation that got us recognised."

Dale treats transgender clients for both lasting hair removal and permanent hair reduction using the >



Ellipse Nordlys machine and said it took six months for the NHS to approve her business for the scheme. "They are very safety conscious. We had to prove we are who we say we are, that we are competent in what we're doing and that the machines we are using are of a high quality," she adds.

Having a medical background was, of course, also an advantage. "If someone comes into the clinic on a certain type of medication or if they have a condition, it's not foreign knowledge to me because I'm a nurse. I have a greater idea of what to look for in terms of contraindications," she explains.

Knowledge sharing

Dale employs two experienced therapists at her clinic and believes this partnership between beauty and medical needs to be embraced on a wider scale to create greater understanding between the professions about the specialisms of each.

"It's really important to break down that barrier and work together, having mutual respect and working within the boundaries both professions are safe with," says Dale. "I learn from my beauty therapists as

much as they learn from me. It was only when I started working with my team that I realised what an in-depth knowledge beauty professionals have of the skin and actually, as a nurse, I had less

training at that time in the skin and skin structures than my therapists had."

Dale gives an example, putting the emphasis on the importance of experience. Both her therapists have a vast amount of training and on-the-job experience in laser and IPL. "They are very qualified and careful in what they do, so in a way you would be safer having a treatment with them then you would a doctor or nurse who has only just had their training and never done it practically," she says.

This leads to the ongoing debate about which treatments beauty therapists should be able to do and which should be left to the medics. When quizzed on the subject, Dale admits it's a tough line to draw.

Wider regulation

"It's a very difficult question because I think there are doctors and nurses now who can train to do botox and fillers but haven't had any other training in aesthetics apart from how to inject, and that can cause problems in itself. So, you can go and do a day's training but not be used to looking at the face, whereas beauty therapists have had lots of training and a vast experience in facial anatomy," Dale explains. >

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Clockwise from top: Dale with her team; inside Sarah Dale Aesthetics; the Ellipse Nordlys machine



KEY DATES

1983

Sarah Dale qualifies as a registered general nurse

2006

Trains in IPL, laser hair removal and skin rejuvenation and starts a mobile business

2007

Opens first clinic, based in Medusa Apothecary in Dorchester

2009

Completes advanced training in IPL and laser skin rejuvenation

2013

Acquires Ellipse SPT+ and Venus Freeze skin-tightening system

2015

Buys the Venus Viva fractional resurfacing system

2017

Relocates Sarah Dale Aesthetics to The HighBrow Clinic & Aesthetics and acquires the Ellipse Nordlys. Dale also starts her partnership with the NHS to treat transgender clients

“However, I do think there are some treatments that should be medical and not done by beauty therapists, particularly those that could cause a serious reaction. It’s very difficult because there are so many treatments now and it’s very easy to come out with a blanket statement, but I think the industry should be much more regulated than it is and it should be much more to do with experience.”

But bad press coverage of untrained professionals doing dodgy treatments is not the only thing the aesthetic industry needs to address.

Dale believes there should be greater integrity when it comes to the way it advertises and promotes treatments. “There’s a lot of temptation in aesthetics to just go for what’s most lucrative rather than what’s best for the client.”

She adds: “It’s an industry where it’s really easy to prey on someone’s



vulnerability – on how they look. This problem is something that’s dear to my heart, which is why my clinic is much more about skin health than anti-ageing. You don’t have to be young to be beautiful – you can be just as beautiful in your 80s as you are in your 20s. This is the hallmark of where we’re going.”

Future goals

And this approach is obviously appealing, with Dale’s clinic seeing on average 50 to 60 clients per week, boosting her reputation among the industry and consumers. So, what’s next for the clinic? Dale is considering developing more into body treatments, such as fat reduction and sculpting, and will continue to work closely with Ellipse.

“We’ve had the Ellipse Nordlys IPL and laser machine for 12 months and the doctor who writes the protocols came down six months ago to give us more advanced training. It’s not like other machines because you can go into expert mode and alter the settings dependant on hair type or length, so we’re offering clients treatments that are much more bespoke.” **PB**

Read more...

Advice on how to make your beauty business welcoming to transgender clients:

professionalbeauty.co.uk/transgenderclients

Clockwise from top: A hair removal treatment; the exterior of The HighBrow Clinic; a transgender client