



THE AMERICAS: UNITED STATES

Innovation 2012 Testing, Tracking, and Staying Connected

One of the fastest growing aspects of the wellness industry is technology. From the simple ability to self-diagnose practically any health concern on Google to the more sophisticated methods of monitoring health status via biometric tests, data recording gadgets, and sites for storing our medical records, there is no end in sight in the ever-evolving use of science and technology to support health and well-being.

The challenge facing the spa industry is to find ways to use technologies to stay engaged and connected with our clientele. Last year Jeremy McCarthy, director of global spa development and operations for Starwood Hotels and Resorts, stated in his industry paper, “the ability to engage with our associates and customers in a meaningful way is the most important factor in our success and our focus for the future.” How can we integrate health technology into our spa programs in both a meaningful and profitable way?

Quantifying Health, Wellness, and Fitness Status for Spa Customers

One of the newest metrics becoming available to our spa clients is the Telomere Length (TL) diagnostic test. Telomeres are known as the “protective caps” at the ends of our chromosomes. Telomere length reflects our cellular age (as opposed to chronological age) and serves as a marker for overall health status, as shorter telomeres accelerate age-related decline in the body. We know that telomeres are the “changeable” part of our genome, and we also know that integrating positive lifestyle choices can increase telomere length, and thereby benefit individual wellness by increasing our healthspan. This new test is an opportunity to provide our client with a snapshot of how they are aging. Scientific research has revealed that stress is high on the list of factors that can prematurely shorten one’s TL. The relaxing nature of the spa experience and the therapeutic value of many of the treatments make the “spa intervention” an important option to improve one’s aging status.

Today there are more than 180 million people over the age of 30 in the US alone. This is a potential group that may benefit significantly from leveraging better markers of health. As a barometer of health, TL can drive spa participation by combining molecular measurements that are responsive to behavioral change to create individualized spa programs. To learn more about the basics of Telomere Testing visit: <http://www.telomehealth.com/individuals/faqs/index.html>

A large percentage of our aging population is looking for ways to both monitor their health and well-being and to engage in programs that are specific to their individual needs. Knowledge about health status is empowering, and can lead to a shift towards healthy lifestyle behaviors, spanning stress reduction, fitness, diet, and the use of therapeutic oils, herbs, and supplements. In the Boomers Value Realignment Study, it was reported that 84 percent of boomers are “somewhat to very interested” in “health and fitness programs designed for them.” <http://www.globalspaandwellnesssummit.org/images/stories/pdf/boomersurveyreportwebsite.pdf>

Tracking and Staying Connected

Many spa clients are tech-savvy, data-driven, and tend to care about their health. A large percentage of our spa clientele is currently using, or is interested in, mobile and web platform health devices and tracking. There are many devices currently available to track heart-rate, stress, weight, blood pressure, blood glucose, sleep, and stress. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) estimates the m-health market to grow to USD 23 billion by 2017

Most of these devices and apps send the data to a web-based platform. The platform can then use reporting, gaming, and social interaction to encourage healthy lifestyle behaviors. Branding a platform to have the look and feel of a Spa

property could be an effective way to establish relationships with visitors to your spa property. The ongoing use of the site to record data and improve the status of one's health keeps the user engaged with your brand. Access to the spa user affords the opportunity to encourage future spa visits, promote spa special events, and announce new spa products.

Additionally, the platforms can be programmed to "reward" positive behavior with spa "certificates," "points," or discounts for products or future services.

Corporate Relationships

Coyle Hospitality Group reported that when spa-goers were asked why they visited Spas 88 percent reported for stress management/relaxation. Many corporations are looking for ways to manage stress in their employee populations. Offering stress reduction workshops and/or private sessions, and marketing these programs to local and national organizations can be a viable connection to an on-going corporate client. Using stress tracking as part of a branded health platform can also provide a means to a relationship with corporate clients.

According to Anne Biging, Managing Director, Healing Hotels of the World Germany "People are stressed out. Burnout is one of the top diseases nowadays. Many of our clients use the personal consultancy we offer on our website. It is obvious that people are not only looking for a pampering spa experience but have health issues that they want to take care of." As we look for innovative approaches to meeting the needs of our spa clientele, the health technologies that are now available provide both an opportunity to increase our bottom line and increase connectivity and lasting relationships with individual and corporate clients.

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