

Laser Therapy on Darker Ethnic Skin

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Like all medical procedures laser therapy comes with inherent risks and complications. Because of the increased risk in epidermal side effects when performing laser therapy on patients with darker skin, a higher level of laser expertise and clinical experience in treating darker ethnic skin is recommended to ensure that patients are treated safely. Test spots should always be done as an aid to selecting safe and efficacious treatment parameters. Because of the limited experience in treating patients with darker skin a conservative approach should always be used. Unfortunately, there are no national policies establishing credentialing requirements for those planning to practice laser surgery. The US Food and Drug Administration are responsible for granting individual laser manufacturers' permission to market their lasers for specific indications. The Food and Drug Administration also recommends operator training to use these lasers, but credentialing is a state function and consequently standards for laser therapy vary greatly from state to state. Until the bar is raised and national credentialing policies on laser therapy are established clinicians must police themselves and fully be aware of their capabilities and limitations to ensure that all patients regardless of skin color or ethnicity receive safe and effective treatments.