

Fountain of Youth

Today's explorers have found ways to age well at the Miami Institute for Age Management & Intervention.

Jul 1, 2005

By: [Ellen Sturm Niz](#)

Medical Spa Report



Miami Is Home To Pristine Beaches, A vibrant nightlife, and beautiful people. And, as of February 2005, the trendsetting metropolis is where the magic of medicine is used to prevent and reverse the effects of aging at the Miami Institute for Age Management & Intervention.



The reception area showcases a water feature with mosaic tiles in warm gold and bronze hues.

"After being in practice for almost twelve years, I began to notice that people were coming in for minimally invasive treatments," says medical director Julio Gallo, M.D., F.A.C.S., who is board certified in facial plastic and reconstructive surgery. "They wanted little touch-ups that didn't require anesthesia, surgery, and downtime."

So Gallo hired consultant Cheryl Whitman, CEO of Beautiful Forever, in Englewood Cliffs, NJ, to discuss expanding his services into the medical spa arena. Whitman suggested he contact businessman Stephen Watson, who owned an advertising agency that specialized in the health-care field and was interested in opening a similar enterprise. "I saw that the future was in the preventative and esthetic [area]," says Watson, the institute's president and CEO. After discussing their visions and developing a business

plan, the two opened the Miami Institute, a luxurious 9,000-square-foot medical spa facility located downtown in the Four Seasons Hotel & Tower building.

"The Miami Institute is a unique hybrid between a traditional clinical environment and a medical spa in that all the services offered are medical grade. But the setting is much more comfortable and patient-focused than a traditional doctor's office," says Gallo. "The patient's psychological and emotional [well-being] is as important in treatment success as his or her physical condition."

Within just a few months, the staff at the Miami Institute was treating 40 patients per day in the seven treatment rooms and performing two to three surgeries a day in one of the two surgical suites. The institute's upscale clientele, who appreciate the private waiting rooms and private entrance, come locally from Miami or travel from national and international destinations, including Latin America and Europe. The client mix is 75 percent women and 25 percent men.



The facility's seven treatment rooms are decorated in powder blue, mint, or lavender color schemes.

Gallo oversees the company's medical operations, and Watson handles business development. The staff includes six other doctors: another facial plastic surgeon, a body plastic surgeon, a cosmetic dentist, an internist, an anesthesiologist, and a clinical psychologist. The rest of the 21-member staff includes physician and dental assistants, nurses, medical estheticians, nutritionists, patient coordinators, and administrative and janitorial staff. All treatment staff are hired with medical training and receive continuing education with on-the-job learning and frequent seminars.

Sound Medicine Despite the posh setting—which includes a gold- and bronze-tiled water feature, white leather furniture, and imported stone tiling—all treatments offered are medical in nature. "We don't do any spa treatments in terms of massages or body wraps or nails," says Gallo. "Everything has evidence-based medicine behind it."

Instead of body treatments and pedicures, Gallo and Watson focus on specialized age-management techniques. "In a time when we are living longer, more active lives, it seems only natural to address patients' issues of improving their quality of life," says Gallo. "This can include anything from nutrition to plastic surgery to stress management to human growth hormone replacement."

Services at the Miami Institute include facial and body plastic surgery, chemical and laser peels, microdermabrasion, no-needle mesotherapy treatments, nonablative laser skin resurfacing, laser hair removal, sclerotherapy, intense pulsed light (IPL) therapy, wrinkle fillers, and cosmetic dentistry. The Miami Institute also offers a line of proprietary skincare and nutrition products, called MIx (Miami Institute Compounds), which are used in treatments at the facility and sold for at-home use. The products are custom formulated

on-site for each client, based upon skin analyses and imaging with the Visia Complexion Analysis System.

Gallo says facial fillers for wrinkles, such as Botox, Restylane, Radiesse, and Sculptra (\$500 to \$1,000 per treatment area), are among the most popular noninvasive treatments. Laser hair removal on the face and legs (ranging from a couple hundred dollars to \$1,000) and Beta and TCA peels (\$125 to \$300) are also highly requested.

The institute offers individualized treatment plans for nutrition, fitness, smoking cessation, weight management, and replacement therapies for hormones, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. If patients wish, the staff will act as a concierge, making travel plans and booking rooms at the Four Seasons Hotel—even arranging for a nurse to stay in the hotel room with a client after his or her treatment.



One of the medical spa's two surgical suites.

The facility is equipped with the latest technology. The institute uses the Lumenis LightSheer Diode Laser System for hair removal and the Lumenis One, with the Multi-Spot Nd:YAG module for vascular lesion treatments and the IPL Module for IPL treatments. "They treat all kinds of skintones, which is great for us because of our huge Latin and traveling populations," says Gallo. The institute was also one of the first in the country to begin using WaveLight's Burane Erbium:YAG laser, which has dual ablation and coagulation functions for both skin resurfacing and wrinkle and scar treatment. WaveLight's SINON Q-Switched Ruby Laser, also used at the facility, is ideal for the scar-free treatment of brown spots, pigmented lesions, and wrinkles, according to Gallo. "It allows us to do laser micropeels on patients [while they are awake] or deeper ablation in the operating room," he says. To reduce inflammation and swelling after surgery, especially liposuction, the institute uses the DermaWave Ultrasonic Facial machine as well as lymphatic drainage massages.

Getting the Word Out Watson says they are promoting the business with publicity and community outreach. Having already received great press regarding the facility's opening, Watson is further promoting its services with a year-long program of monthly seminars on a variety of health and wellness issues. Patients and members of the community are invited through direct mail, e-mail announcements, and local newspaper advertisements.

The institute has also developed a program where corporate members' employees can receive 20 percent discounts on any of the institute's services. "It's great for their employees to get help with everything from quitting smoking to dental services to lunchtime cosmetic procedures," says Watson.

Despite already busy schedules, the staff have made time to contribute to charitable causes by donating gift certificates for silent auctions and raffles for the International

Kids Fund and tsunami relief organizations, as well as performing pro bono work for victims of domestic violence.

Poised for the Future The Miami Institute is quickly achieving its goals, and its founders are already looking to plan another clinic in the United States or abroad within the next year. "The reactions that we've been getting have been phenomenal," says Watson. He hopes to reach \$5 to \$6 million in annual revenues within the first year and develop the business by 20 to 25 percent each coming year. "We want to have good managed growth," he says. "We're looking for patients who believe in the whole philosophy and will become repeat customers for the rest of their lives."

On the medical side, Gallo says they will soon open the second operating suite, add a nurse, and begin performing up to five surgeries a day. In addition, "We will expand more into lasers as they are proven effective and consider new fillers that are being developed as they are approved by the FDA," says Gallo. He is also energized by a trial in which they are participating to determine the effectiveness of an FDA-approved no-needle mesotherapy treatment by DermaWave. "There is no bruising and pain, like with traditional mesotherapy," he says.

Whatever is next on the horizon, the Miami Institute is poised for the future. "We want to be recognized as a national leader in the area of age," says Watson. "We have the right people and the right tools."