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## Joanna Szendzielorz-Tajak

# Aesthetic medicine: quality and less controversy means faster development

Aesthetic medicine is a dynamic market in constant development says Joanna Szendzielorz-Tajak, chairwoman of Lea Vivacy who distribute brands such as StylAge, Desirial, Regeneris, RRS and Softfil-Polska. She reveals to us what her company has in store for 2017 and how honest and transparent distribution of medical products can influence how aesthetic services work in Poland.

**Rynek Estetyczny:** - It seems Poland already has no shortage of aesthetic medicine centres. Do you think this market has matured? Or is it still developing?

**Joanna Szendzielorz-Tajak:** - I think aesthetic medicine is a dynamic market which is in constant development.

Up until recently this domain was still the subject of much controversy in Poland. It still is today actually although it has become more accessible due to wider coverage in the media and on television. Polish society is becoming more and more accepting of aesthetic treatments. This acceptance is due to many factors. A significantly wider group of people have been able to observe the effects of the treatments, either personally or, for example, through radio and television programmes and newspaper articles. Many people now see that aesthetic medicine helps with skin care and to slow down the ageing process without being too invasive. People should remember that the skin is our biggest

organ and it is important to look after it. The effects of aesthetic medicine treatments are increasingly natural and should not be exaggerated. They can be very positive, focusing on reducing certain detrimental processes. Along with the growing awareness among Poles regarding aesthetic medicine treatments, there is also growing acceptance towards it. It is no longer only for the rich and famous.

Developments in technology have made products more accessible and affordable which has undoubtedly helped to make aesthetic medicine more mainstream. Doctors also have an increasingly wider range of treatments available at their disposal compared to a few years ago. This means that

practically everyone can choose something for themselves according to their needs when it comes to the desired effect but also from the perspective of budget. Aesthetic medicine is certainly a domain in rapid development in Poland and globally. Of course, this development has a different nature than a few years ago, it has its own specific character.

**This may also be due to the increasing wealth of Poles. The analytical report by KPMG that we presented in January's edition of *Rynek Estetyczny* showed that the number of rich people in Poland is systematically increasing and in 2016 the domestic luxury goods market was worth nearly 16.5 billion zloty.**

There is in fact a lot of economic data clearly indicating increasing wealth in Poland. This has the effect of increasing interest in aesthetic medicine. We should also point out that we have highly qualified doctors in this domain in Poland offering world-class services. On the other hand, increasing wealth in society combined with increasing awareness helps to develop a specific culture of a healthy and active lifestyle. It is becoming more and more popular and important to have a healthy lifestyle and look after oneself to stay in good shape for a long time. In the past people aged 30-40 seemed very serious and mature. When I was at school my 40-year-old teacher simply seemed an old woman. These days people live longer and we perceive age differently. You reach 30-40 and only then does life begin. Besides, today's patients, especially younger women aged 20-30, are far more aware of their needs and also have more and more options to take care of their appearance. This is why they start to use gentle anti-ageing procedures. Generally, at this age, there is no need for

more invasive treatments although there is the option, for example, of mesotherapy or another regenerative method.

in terms of safety and comfort of treatments. This is one of the reasons why hyaluronic acid is today one of the best and most tested

constant development. This is because, on the one hand, they are constantly being improved, and on the other hand, they have



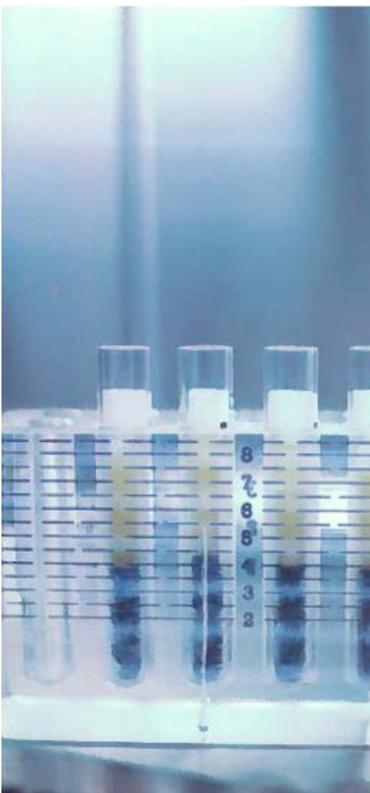
**The range of aesthetic medicine services is constantly increasing. Are the most popular still hyaluronic acid fillers and botox or are other options gaining a significant position on the market?**

Many procedures with hyaluronic acid have improved even more in terms of safety and comfort. In recent years fillers have been improved, tested and had anaesthetic-painkilling substances added to them as well as antioxidants to give added beneficial aesthetic effects or other substances to reduce the risk of bruising and swelling. We have improved all the key features of hyaluronic acid products

substances in aesthetic medicine. It is a market leader along with botox. Sales statistics and results confirm this. Sales results for injectable hyaluronic acid or botox products still represent the main segment on the whole global aesthetic medicine market. It is expected that this segment will continue to grow rapidly. The global growth forecast is 8 percent per year until 2020. Interestingly, the leader on the European aesthetic medicine market is hyaluronic acid treatments and this is particularly the case in France where this type of product is number one in surgeries. It is safe to say that the market for hyaluronic acid products is in

been on the market a long time, they have proven themselves and many years of tests testify to their safety and effectiveness. These types of treatments have their regular users and due to well-known and renowned laboratories constantly working on innovations, improving quality and comfort, they are still able to win over new converts. Furthermore, doctors are keen to use tested methods. This allows the doctor, patient and manufacturer to sleep peacefully which is also very important. Very fast growth of course attracts new technology which then takes its place on the aesthetics market. If a segment is still developing, the growth rate is generally

very high. For example, body contouring devices are growing in popularity very quickly. The market growth for this type of technology is estimated at about 15 percent per year. This is however growth calculated from quite a different level than in the case of hyaluronic acid products.



**In what ways have hyaluronic acid fillers changed? How are modern products different compared to 10-15 years ago?**

There have been significant changes. It would appear that hyaluronic acid has been around for years and that all you need to do is produce and sell it.

However, key changes have been made to the technology for producing the substance itself. This is what makes it possible to constantly improve the quality of the raw material in terms of safety and performance and give peace of mind to the doctors who use it as well as the patients who they give it to. A very important achievement in improving hyaluronic acid is reducing to a minimum the amount of crosslinking agents. This means that the properties of the hyaluronic acid created in the production process are closer to what occurs naturally in the body. Another aim is for optimal elasticity of products which makes them easier to administer and to sculpt. The main aim though is to obtain the most natural effects which last the appropriate amount of time and for the treatment itself to be safe and comfortable for both parties.

An important change is also in offering a wider, full range of products intended for particular areas of treatment. The doctor needs materials with different properties depending on indications, skin type and expected results. Much like a painter who

needs a whole palette of colours to create a great work of art. The focus currently is on the many properties which influence the effectiveness of the products. We are analysing more factors including viscosity, viscoelasticity, molecular particle weight, endotoxin and protein content. Another factor is also innovations which make the doctor's job more comfortable. We are working on a more ergonomic syringe which would allow the filler to be administered more evenly in order to reduce the risk of uneven skin and make it easier to sculpt the material correctly.

Comparing the doctor to an artist who sculpts a face is certainly warranted. A good doctor is someone with an artistic sense who has a vision of beauty, sees the face spatially and is able to assess how shadow and light are distributed on it. The development of fillers has meant that doctors today take a different approach to work with the patient. In the past they corrected wrinkles and defects, these days the specialist should take a holistic approach to the patient's face and the effects of their work. The priority for us is the

natural appearance, the 'French touch'. It is about bringing out the patient's natural beauty.

**What influences the quality of the hyaluronic acid product and how does the doctor or patient know that they are using safe and good quality fillers?**

There are at least a few factors which require attention. Some can be checked easily while others are harder to identify. The trained eye or hand of an experienced doctor will certainly be able to recognise a good quality product. One of the first and obvious things is to check the laboratory that the hyaluronic acid comes from. It is not only about who endorses the said product, but also where it is produced because the named producer is not always the same as the manufacturer. My view is that products from well-known and globally renowned laboratories will generally be higher quality than products from a manufacturer who is hard to identify or from places that nobody has heard of. The doctor can request the product documentation, assess the method of crosslinking the

hyaluronic acid, check whether it is certified for use in Europe and also globally. They can also check the official indications for specific areas of treatment. It should be emphasised that a very important issue is the raw material used to produce hyaluronic acid gel. There are a few categories of hyaluronic acid raw materials used to produce medical products such as supplements, eye drops, globules, gels or creams made with acid for exterior use, gels for intra-articular, intraocular or intra-epidermal injections. Vivacy Laboratories use raw materials of the highest category of cleanliness to meet the most stringent standards. There is a significant price difference between the different categories of raw materials and the technological processes for processing them. This is why it is worth checking the product's certificate if the price is suspiciously low. Manufacturers sometimes use less stringent standards when it comes to quality and safety in order to offer cheaper prices.

**A doctor will generally have a lot of experience and knowledge about**

**the products. But can a patient ask to see some certificate to verify the quality of what they are being injected with?**

The patient can ask the doctor what product they are being given, how well known it is, how long it has been on the market, whether it has a quality certificate and authorisation for use in Poland, how long the doctor has been using it and how their experience has been. The doctor should provide this information.

**Does it make a difference which country the filler comes from?**

Europe is the birthplace of aesthetic medicine, and particularly hyaluronic acid. The French are the leaders on our continent in this respect. We have a laboratory and factory in France. Two big American companies are also interestingly producing hyaluronic acid in Europe. The European laboratories in my opinion have the most substantial experience and unique know-how. A good few years ago, one of the big companies had plans to build a hyaluronic acid factory in Poland. However, it turned out that at the time we were

not able to provide the right standards and possibilities to produce the highest quality raw materials. It involves rather complicated technology. Experience is crucial too. When it comes to producing the highest quality hyaluronic acid it is a bit like administering it, it may seem straightforward but as we know it is important to have both a sound understanding and a lot of experience in order to excel at this type of treatment. I think the best and most experienced doctors are the most humble ones and would not claim to be perfect because they are constantly learning.

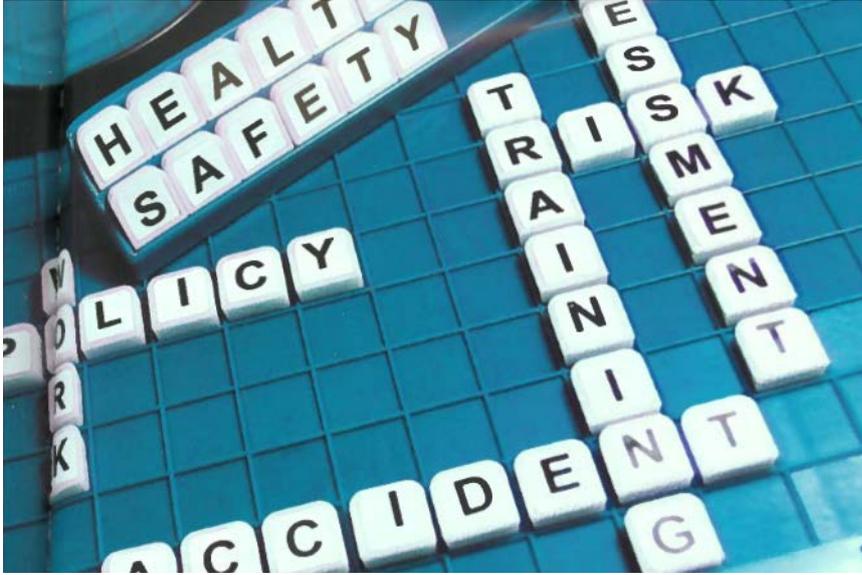
**You said that the quality of the filler is linked to the price because the best raw materials are also the most expensive ones. How much should someone expect to pay for a good quality hyaluronic acid filler treatment? What is the price limit and when should people be cautious?**

It is hard to specify a precise price limit. I think that if someone offers a treatment using one ampoule, e.g. a minor correction or lip augmentation, for less than 500 zloty then you should definitely be

wary, inquire about the product, look into the place and the operator and find out something more about the surgery. The average price of a hyaluronic acid treatment ranges more or less from 800 up to 1200-1500 zloty. A lot depends on the town, the doctor and area of treatment, as well as the type of product.

**I would like to return to the subject of innovative treatments and devices which are entering the market and are going to develop. You mentioned before that body sculpting is a growing market...**

I do not consider myself an expert in this field. All I can do is share my observations of the market which is that the body sculpting technology segment is seeing more and more growth. This is an area which will develop over the coming years. It seems also that technology based on generating a different type of energy, such as lasers, is going to develop fairly quickly. Another area which is currently experiencing a lot of growth is intimate procedures, for both men and women, and regenerative medicine.



**Platelet-rich plasma was a product which paved the way for many other regenerative and biostimulative solutions...**

Definitely. For about the last two years we have seen a huge increase in different biostimulative methods. They are not yet wildly popular yet as this is a field of medicine which we are still constantly learning. However, seeing the possibilities opening up in front of us, I can confidently say that this is an area which will see a lot of development in the coming years. Many promising propositions are yet to be fully tested. There are various ideas around the use of parent cells or other types of biological materials. There is a strong drive to move forwards, although with a lot of methods of this type it is

important to take a cautious approach. On the other hand, you mentioned platelet-rich plasma, this is actually gold standard in surgeries. Doctors and patients alike have accepted and appreciated this treatment. They have been convinced by both the tests and the effects observed post-treatment.

**Can we expect anything new from Lea Vivacy this year? Can you let us in on the company's plans?**

At the Congress of the Polish Society for Aesthetic Dermatologists (PSAD) we will be presenting an innovative technique for administering hyaluronic acid. The well-known and respected expert, **Doctor Sandrine Sebban**, is coming to Poland. In previous years she has

taken the opportunity to present some groundbreaking methods which have become standard practice in aesthetic surgeries. She was also the first to present the use of volumetric products in Poland, still with a hard cannula. A couple of years later she presented treatments using soft cannulas which also had a strong influence on the technique used for this type of procedure. This year she will be showing a completely new technique for administering hyaluronic acid which will aim to give as natural effects as possible, we call this the 'French touch'. As a producer of hyaluronic acid products we are constantly looking to improve the already high quality of our products. We are known for introducing solutions

which are innovative while also being safe and tested. We have our own research and development department consisting of fantastic scientists and experts who work at full capacity. We will very soon surprise people with a new anaesthetic substance which increases the comfort of treatment and eliminates unwanted side effects. We also work on the safety of products when it comes to availability.

**Is this to do with responsible distribution of the filler?**

This is a problem which varies from country to country. In Poland we have the problem that medical products can sometimes be bought from websites or online auctions.

**The medical associations PSAD and the Polish Society of Aesthetic and Anti-Aging Medicine have both worked to raise companies' awareness of this.**

Injectable hyaluronic acid products are medical products which should be properly secured and stored in the correct way. This is why they should not be distributed in this way.

Besides, distributors are required by law to know exactly where these products are sold. One of the reasons for this is so that these products can be recalled in case of adverse events. We have a whole system for checking the quality and we take responsibility for our products. If somebody buys a product from an unknown source they have no idea where it has come from, how it has been stored, if it has already been opened... there are no quality guarantees. If something happens, the unlicensed seller will not take responsibility for the product. There are also attempts to counterfeit the best products on the market which we are also experiencing. Of course we are working on this though.

### **What measures are being taken?**

We have recently introduced a security system in our company which is unique on a global scale and greatly limits these completely unregulated distribution channels of our products and their counterfeits.

### **What effect will this have on potential buyers?**

It will definitely be a good move from the perspective of product safety and the image of the products and the company. We will know who we are working with. Our brand will represent a guarantee of high quality to both doctors and patients. The regulation of distribution can scare off just the less honest buyers who would not be authorised to use medical products. We would even rather sell less initially but to people we can have a permanent relationship with.

**I hope building the brand's strength on honesty and transparency in this way will pay off in the long term.**

I am confident that it will. It is very important to us to know that the products are going to doctors who value high quality and safety.

**If all companies took this approach to producing and distributing products then the Polish market, without waiting for the law to be passed, would regulate itself by taking care of quality.**

It would certainly help but let's not forget that there must be action on

both sides, meaning the lawmakers and the producers, to bring the expected results. In western countries there are far more stringent regulations for aesthetic medicine treatments than here. Laboratories and distributors are often subject to controls. We know this from our own experience as we have production in France. It requires more effort from the companies, but on the other hand the market rules are clear and equal for everyone. We are prepared for quality controls and sure of the results. It also gives us confidence and a guarantee that we are giving doctors and patients high quality products.

**Thank you for talking to us.**