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Incorporating infrared sauna technology into your practice is an effective way to add value, generate referrals, and grow your bottom line.

BY J. MATTHEW BURNETT, DC

As a chiropractor, you are likely both a clinical professional and a small business owner. This means that the tools you use in practice have to be effective in healing and be economically sound.

The integration of infrared sauna technology into your practice is a possible way to accomplish both objectives.

In professional sports — especially in the NFL — it is common to see a progression of overuse injuries, lacerations, and muscular fatigue. Infrared sauna therapy has been so successful in treating these athletes that many of them integrate sauna usage post-workout to aid with recovery and stress reduction.

Increasing circulation and inhibiting the sympathetic nervous system can have significant healing benefits, which is why infrared (IR) therapy can be integrated effectively into any treatment protocol. By suppressing the sympathetic nervous system, the body suppresses the cytokine TGF-beta-1, which has been proven to be the most consistent stimulant of myofibroblast production.

Additional clinical benefits of IR therapy include lowering blood pressure; stimulating subcutaneous wound healing; increasing circulation due to the release of nitric oxide, thus inducing vasodilation; and reducing pain.

If you currently employ lipolaser technology without IR therapy, you’re missing the boat. Not only can saunas be esthetically appealing, uniquely compact, and equipped with the finest in audio/video systems, but some use hypoallergenic wood that is safe to use in the clinical setting even with the most sensitive patients.

**Performance-care protocol:** The sauna should be used three times per week for four to six weeks.

This is the recovery and performance enhancing protocol to aid those patients who are attempting to increase their metabolism, strength, post-workout recovery, energy levels, and muscular endurance.

IR therapy has demonstrated the ability to excite the mitochondria of the cell, thus producing an increase in ATP (energy), which aids in increased metabolic function. As the body’s core temperature elevates, the heat elicits the release of growth hormone, which in turn increases muscle hypertrophy, lipolysis, and calcium retention.

Increases have also been seen in integrins, gap junction proteins, and other regenerating genes with exposure to IR therapy, suggesting that it accelerates tissue recovery.

**Blood-pressure protocol:** The sauna should be used two to three times per week for four weeks.

When attempting to promote a healthier circulatory system, it is important to understand that the deep heat of IR therapy causes a
Full-spectrum IR saunas are a modality that can address a wide array of symptoms and conditions by biostimulating tissue in a safe and controlled environment.

It is believed that this additional stress placed on the heart leads to conditioning of the myocardium, which eventually lowers blood pressure. Also, the release of nitric oxide promotes vasodilation of the circulatory system and enhances blood flow to the periphery.

**Weight-loss protocol:** In this instance, the sauna should be used three times per week for eight weeks.

Studies have shown that a 30-minute sauna session can burn between 400 and 600 calories. Hit it hard and be consistent; isn’t that the key with any weight-loss program? Couple that with good nutrition and exercise and it’s a win-win situation for everyone.

**Pain-and-inflammation protocol:** For this, use the sauna two times per week for six weeks.

IR therapy provides a deep penetrating heat that helps reduce pain and promotes increased circulation to areas of discomfort. IR therapy may also reduce and prevent the formation of scar tissue and myofascial adhesions.

**Food for thought**

Does IR therapy have the ability to enhance the immune system? If body temperature rises even 1 to 3 degrees during a session, would it not be fair to assume you are inducing a controlled fever?

Fever is said to promote the production of white blood cells within the bone marrow and killer T cells by way of the thymus. Could this be occurring every time we engage the body in this type of treatment?

Research indicates that saunas enable the body to heal faster and function better.\(^1\)\(^2\) And there is still a lot to be discovered about this new and effective tool.

Educate patients on the safety and effectiveness of IR therapy and monitor first-time users closely. Your staff must also be educated and aware of dehydration issues with all patients using the sauna.

Full-spectrum IR saunas are a modality that can address a wide array of symptoms and conditions by biostimulating tissue in a safe and controlled environment.

As a healthcare provider and businessperson, you have to look at new tools carefully. From a business perspective, saunas can be of tremendous benefit. You can offer sauna treatments as a value-added service. They become a great referral tool and revenue generator because they help provide great care — and that’s what matters most in patient retention and compliance.

**J. Matthew Burnett, DC,** is the founder of Burnett Family Chiropractic and Sports Performance and a leading chiropractic and sports medicine professional. He is the trainer of numerous NFL players and teams including the Pittsburgh Steelers, and uses Sunlighten Saunas as part of his treatment. He can be contacted through burnettfamilychiropractic.com.

**References**