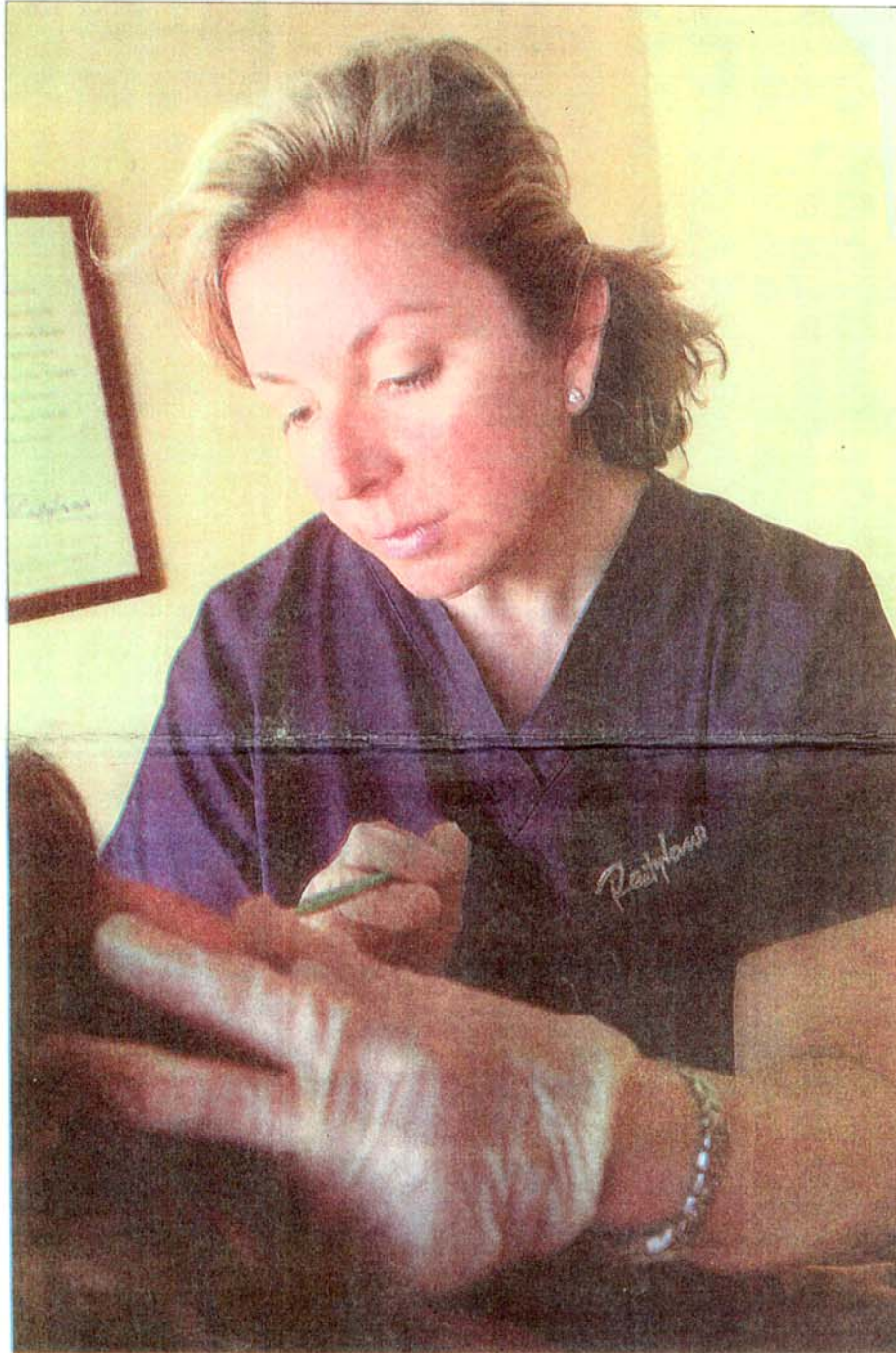


Look good, feel good



Hour photo/JENNIFER MANNA

Lisa Topham, a registered nurse, recently opened Skin Rejuvenation Center in Norwalk.

Registered nurse opens skin care center

By **CHRIS BOSAK**
Hour Staff Writer

NORWALK — Lisa Topham is a pioneer in the skin rejuvenation business.

Last fall Topham opened Skin Rejuvenation Center at 91 East Ave. and became the first registered nurse in Connecticut to open such a business. Topham has worked in the field for nearly 20 years and developed a loyal base of customers while working as a nurse at plastic surgery prac-

tices.

Topham, who works in the same building as her medical director Dr. Rick Rosen, offers the latest trends in skin care, such as Botox, Sculptra, Radiesse, Hylaform, Restylane, and skin peels. She also performs permanent pigmentation procedures — such as permanent eyeliner — and treats clients for adult and adolescent acne, and leg spider vessels.

She said the non-surgical skin treatments she special-

izes in are vastly more popular than traditional plastic surgery.

"With relatively no downtime, you're improving people's quality of life," Topham said of the skin rejuvenation field. "It's like the old saying: If you look good, you feel good. That's especially true in this competitive area (Fairfield County). Everybody is looking for an edge."

Her experience, loyal fol-

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lowing and "strong business head," were all factors in Topham setting out on her own.

"After 20 years in the business and being successful at it, you've pretty much got it," she said. "I lost the security (of working for someone else) and it was a little scary, but I'm always up for a challenge.

"Things are going great," she said. "I feel really blessed. I've been working in Fairfield County for 19 years and that made the transition easier because I had a good following. Word of mouth got me a lot of new patients. I'm really glad I did it."

Her clients are happy she took the plunge into entrepreneurship as well. She said most of her clients are more comfortable working with a nurse instead of a plastic surgeon or other physician.

"The majority of my client base is women and I'm a woman. I think women relate better to women, and often people relate to a nurse better than a physician," Topham said. "People are comfortable working with a nurse. I often served as a liaison between patient and doctor when I was working with other practices. Now, people are comfortable with me because they know they won't be pressured by a physician to

have surgery or another big-ticket item. Sometimes a nurse is better listener, too."

Topham is acting as a pioneer in another way, as well. She is looking to expand her practice with a satellite office in a nearby town and is training another nurse to work with her.

Deciding to start a business and implementing the business plan is never easy, but Topham's job was made a little easier because of her association with Dr. Rosen. The two had worked together for the past three years and had a good working relationship.

"My business is separate from him, but acts as my medical director. Legally, a nurse has to have a medical director," Topham said. "There's a natural synergy between plastic surgeons and people who do what I do. I refer patients to him and he refers patients to me."

Recent FDA approval of many treatments and added exposure from reality TV make-over programs has increased significantly the interest in the types of procedures she performs, according to Topham.

"Twenty years ago about 5 percent of the people having this type of work done were men," she said. "Now it's about 20 percent. There's definitely been an increase."

She also said her client base is becoming younger, due in part to an increased number of 30- and 40-somethings getting skin cancer — Topham is big fan of sunblock.

Topham also plays host to the occasional "Botox party," a fairly recent phenomenon in which several friends get together for Botox injections. Topham, however, said she will only do the parties at her office in a clinical setting.

Botox, a purified protein injection, temporarily reduces frown lines on the face. Botox can also be used to control excess sweating of the palms and under arms.

Scultra, Radiesse, Hylaform and Restylane are soft tissue fillers used to correct lines in the face, fill out cheeks, help sunken eyelids or augment lips.

Topham also uses Obagi skin care products to develop healthy skin. The Obagi system helps diminish fine lines, increases smoothness of skin, reduces pore size, controls oil production, treats acne and reduces brown spots and other pigment problems.

Skin Rejuvenation Center is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Thursday, and is open one Friday a month. Topham can be reached at (203) 831-8029.