

Advanced results

The nail industry has seen incredible advances in technology, innovation and education. Nail enhancement systems are constantly evolving. **Sonette van Rensburg** focuses on what's happening in the market at present.



Nail Enhancements originated in the mid 50's, and were developed using dental products and acrylics. The products were very basic and inconsistent with a limited colour choice. Today, through innovation, we have a multitude of professional and advanced enhancement systems to choose from, each with their own distinct features, technologies and applications. Nails have become far more than a necessary beauty service; they are a fashion accessory, and, as such, are influenced by fashion trends, colours and styles.

Talking technology

There are three main nail enhancement systems being used in the professional nail industry today: liquid & powder, gel, and silk or fibre. Although the liquid & powder system was traditionally known as an acrylic system, all three nail enhancement systems are actually

related to the same chemical family, and are inevitably all made from acrylics. They just work on different principles when bonding together to form a solid durable nail coating. It is therefore important to understand these systems and what differentiates them from one another.

Acrylics are among some of the most sophisticated chemicals being used in the beauty industry to date. The process by which a liquid or semi-liquid becomes a solid is known as polymerisation. The arranging and rearranging of chemical molecules to create different polymer chains is known as a chemical reaction. A single molecule is known as a monomer. Nail enhancement coatings are created when billions of molecules join together in chains to form a solid structure. Longer chains are known as polymers. These polymer chains cross-link with one another creating a strong durable coating. Nail companies →

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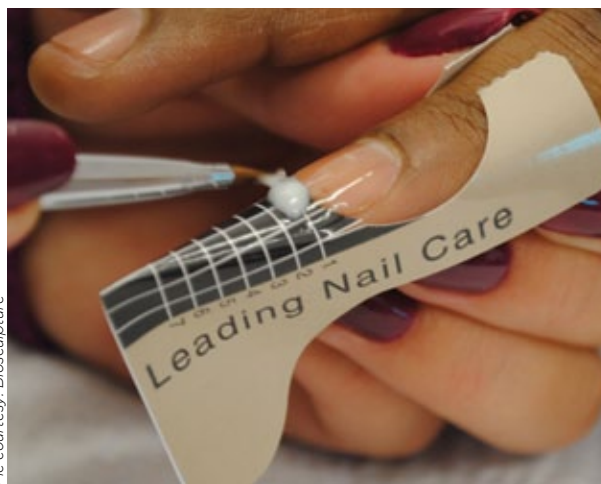
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NAILS



Pic courtesy: Biosculpture

have used advancement in product technology to their advantage, using various different methods to get these polymer chains to react differently and form even stronger, more durable and longer lasting nail enhancements.

The technology being used today is extremely high tech. Advantages include: toughness, superior adhesion, colour stability, durability, and better workability, making the nail technicians' work far easier. "If you are still battling with crystallising, bubbles, colour clarity, and long setting time, then it is time to re-evaluate the products that you are working with," says Katia da Silva of NSI.

Some of the methods currently being used:

- **Cross linking** - is a method used to join different polymer chains together, resulting in a strong flexible three dimensional structure. Many nail enhancement products are made this way.
- **Inter penetrating polymer networks (IPN's)** - were first used in high-tech aerospace polymers. Instead of adding extra cross links to the structure, this technology reinforces and becomes part of a cross linking structure, creating less shrinkage and making the nail enhancement tougher.
- **Nanotechnology** - is the use of nano-size ingredients to create a tight surface network. This technology is different to the nano spheres, which are used in other beauty products to carry natural ingredients deep into the layers of the skin. It is targeted at improving application, aesthetics and product function.

Liquid & Powder System

"Liquid & powder products have become extremely innovative and user friendly, allowing the technician to work effectively and efficiently," says da Silva. "Nail manufacturers now offer a wide variety of different colour French pinks and French whites in order to suite the client's needs, taste, lifestyle, personality, and skin tone."

Natural nail health is placed as a major priority in nail enhancement development. "With the latest technologies and covalent bonding opposed to hydrogen bonds it is no longer required to excessively dehydrate or over buff the natural nail, which is a huge plus for our industry," says Jo-D Stroh of CND.

On the sculpting front, advanced product technology has been of huge benefit to the professional nail technician. "With the combination of today's product technology, one can sculpt nails, which are believably thin, flexible, natural looking, fashionably long and strong," says Dina Katakuzinos of EzFlow.

NAILS

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VANESSA VENTER, BIOSCULPTURE

Gel System

“UV gel is developing extremely fast and the varieties offered are huge,” says da Silva. “When selecting gel for the first time, ensure whether you would like a buff off or a soak off. The chemistry involved in the two varies greatly and offers different wearability. Clients may ask for a particular gel, however, their nail bed may not allow for such a product. The natural nail plate is the foundation, and the enhancement will only last on what the foundation allows. LED is also a new curing concept for LED gels, and the advantages is that it cures faster than traditional UV, and there is no need to replace globes as frequently.”

“Always remember that gels are formulated and manufactured to cure specifically with their own UV or LED lamps,” she adds.

Targeting trends

Nails are very affected by the latest fashion trends, so make sure that you stay on top of things and know what the trends are as they are constantly and seasonally changing.

“The nail industry is exciting and ever changing. More clients are aware of and making use of the amazing colours, art and nail shapes that have made nails a fashion accessory,” says Vanessa Venter of Biosculpture. “Bling is in, and there are a wide range of glitter gels and glitter powders that can be fashioned to create any nail art masterpiece.”

“Deep smile lines, opaque powders and illusion sculpting are definitely still huge, with oval nails making a major impact on the catwalks,” says Stroh. “We are also seeing metallics and dark nails, as well as elaborate art adorned with crystals and layered shimmery effects - the possibilities are endless with artistic freedom we have with the latest products.”

“The “Stiletto Shape” has slowly been creeping into our market in South Africa,” says Da Silva. “Short is also becoming a trend - the shorter a client goes, the braver she →



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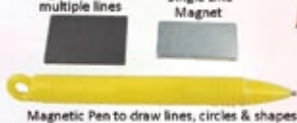
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“INVEST IN A GOOD BRUSH. A TECHNICIAN CAN ONLY BE AS GOOD AS HER TOOLS.”

KATIA DA SILVA, NSI

also becomes in colour. Colour is therefore overtaking the demand for the traditional French design.

“It is becoming important as professionals to offer a wide selection and variety to your client. This will aid in client retention.”

Sculpting focus

For a new nail technician sculpting can be quite a daunting and difficult technique to grasp. It acquires a combination of different elements, which have to come together, such as knowledge, skill and technical ability. This applies not only to the application of the product, but most importantly how to place and fit the sculpting form to get the best results. It is also vital to know how to create a well-engineered enhancement with the correct shape and form to complement the client's hands and nails.

Tools and equipment along with skill and technique are some of the most important factors to ensuring beautiful flawless nail enhancements. Stroh emphasises the importance of having dowels and forms as part of your technician enhancement kit. “I also think nail professionals are becoming better educated on the importance of better quality sculpting brushes and the harsh effects of drills and rough abrasives,” she adds.

Da Silva sees the brush as the most important tool on a technician's table: “Invest in a good brush. A technician can only be as good as her tools.”

Extension Forms that are easily inserted to connect with the inner c-curve of the natural nail should be used. This creates a platform onto which a lengthening gel is applied





to create the necessary length, says Venter. "Different size gel brushes should be used to create sculptured enhancements, and perfect extended free edge."

In terms of technique, Reverse French is definitely a more widely spread practice as the depth of smile lines are much deeper opposed to traditional sculpting methods, says Stroh.

Da Silva agrees: "This new trend in techniques is amazing as it offers a wide option, transforming any nail shape, even when it comes to nail biters. Clients love to see it as they are fascinated to see something out of the ordinary.

"Sculpting with gel is not very popular due to the chemistry of gel. However, when done correctly, and with the correct consistency product, it is an exciting challenge."

Busting the Myths

There have been various untrue statements made about nail enhancements. Here are the actual facts:

• **Nail enhancements cause cancer**

A damaging rumour, which started a couple of years ago, is that acrylics could cause cancer. This was related to the initiator known as (BPO) Benzoyl Peroxide which is present in the powder and assists in the polymerisation process. The minimal quantity of BPO evaporates during the curing process, leaving little or no trace of the ingredient behind. Up until today, there has been no further proof that nail enhancement products are carcinogenic.

• **Better for the Nail**

Beware of claims that some nail enhancement systems and products are better for the nail than others. Nail enhancement products have been around for many years now, with plenty of testing and research having gone into what makes these products perform at their best and what the harmful effects are on the natural nail. No professional nail enhancement product eats into or damages the natural nail by itself; it is rather the incorrect and improper application of them that does.

• **Make it last**

In the past it was thought that the only way to get enhancement products to adhere properly to the natural nail, was to etch or roughen up the nail plate, causing sever damage. This is no longer necessary – one should literally only remove the shine or oily layer from the nail plate. Technique makes all the difference in this regard.

• **Some enhancement systems are unsafe**

Acrylics are used in the biomedical and dental industries. So, if these chemicals are safe to use on the body, then there is no reason that they would not be safe to use on the natural nail plate. Some people also automatically assume that enhancement systems are less harmful because there is no odour. We need to be really careful believing that when chemicals have a very strong odour or no odour at all, that ->



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they are more or less harmful, and this could not be further from the truth.

• **Nail Enhancements do not need to be rebalanced**

This is absolutely not possible. If there were such a product, we would all be out of business. The natural nail plate has a natural progression, and that is it must grow, which means the nail enhancement will grow along with it. Everything in life requires balance and when nail enhancements are not rebalanced it will lead to lifting and breakage. Nail enhancements, which constantly lift or get broken will eventually damage the natural nail plate, so timely rebalancing is important. Some people believe that rebalancing damages the natural nail. Yes excessive filing and leverage with nippers can cause severe damage and trauma to the nail plate. It, again, boils down to the skill of the technician.

• **Is MMA still hurting our industry?**

The professional nail industry has been struggling since the 1970's to stop the improper use of methyl methacrylate (MMA) monomer in artificial nail enhancements. However, after many warnings and articles having been written on the topic, and despite numerous bans and prohibitions in the US, there are still some irresponsible nail technicians using it instead of the legal alternative EMA (Ethyl Methacrylate.)

Doug Schoon of CND provides further insight: “Rallies against the use of MMA monomer have in the past been for the wrong reasons. The arguments against its use were not based on factual information. This caused the spread of misinformation in the industry. Some claims were that it caused cancer, birth defects and was highly toxic; none of which are true. MMA is considered the best and most widely used bone cement in the world, and is used by doctors internationally. Having said this, the fact remains, MMA monomer is most definitely not recommended for the use of nail enhancements,” he states.

“MMA was first used due to its ability to bond well to the natural nail

plate, which had to be aggressively abraded prior to application. MMA enhancements are also not easy to remove and do not soak quickly or easily, resulting in nail technicians having to pry them off the nail plate with nippers and nail instruments, leaving nail plates overly thin and damaged.

“MMA is an extremely hard very brittle and inflexible polymer structure, which meant that when the wearer had an accident and broke a nail, they would suffer severe damage to their nail plate and nail bed because of the rigidity of the product. The overly thinned natural nail plate would break before the enhancement, leading to severe nail plate damage or infection.

“The American nail industry assumed that government bans would control and put an end to the use of MMA but has proven to be ineffective. Regulations are meaningless if they are not enforced. Unfortunately there are insufficient means by which to monitor its use.

“The biggest culprits are the importers or suppliers of MMA that continue selling MMA cheaply, allowing nail technicians to offer low priced services and make huge profits. The only way to stop this is to shut down the importers and suppliers of MMA. Until some serious consequences are imposed on importers and suppliers, this will unfortunately continue and the problem could escalate.

“The lack of nail professionals receiving proper education is just as big a risk to our industry as MMA monomer products. Those that do still use MMA are not properly and professionally educated with regards to using the proper procedures.



“Consumers also don't know the difference between MMA, EMA or BMA. In their mind, they're all artificial nails, so they associate MMA misinformation with all enhancement products.”

“In South Africa we are not as strictly regulated as we should be, and thus there will always be the risk of MMA still present in some products,” says Venter.

Stroh also believes that this is still a major concern: “We have many products on the market without proper ingredient listing, and professionals are buying these products purely because they are generic and cheap.” Her advice is to stick to reputable brands, and demand material safety data sheets (MSD's).

Conclusion

For our industry to grow and prosper we have to make sure we stay up to date with growing trends, techniques and advancement in product technology. It is everyone's professional responsibility to be involved, properly informed and well educated and to make sure that we carry that message through! **PB**

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