What All Types of Spas, Wellness Facilities, and Salt Therapy Providers Need to Know About Misconceptions Regarding Himalayan Salt

As you may know, salt therapy/halotherapy has been around for several decades in Europe and the spa and wellness industry in North America started to take notice back in 2011/2012 when this was being identified as a future trend. In 2014, the Salt Therapy Association (STA) was formed to become the trade association founded by international leaders in the industry from researchers, manufacturers, owner/operators, vendors, physicians, respiratory therapists, leaders in the spa industry and others to take this trend and help shape salt therapy/halotherapy into an industry including establishing various standards and protocols. This trend grew from a dozen facilities providing dry salt therapy/halotherapy back in 2012 to over 700+ facilities in 2018 in North America and the industry is projected for continued and accelerated growth. The initial growth has occurred in stand-alone salt facilities, and various types of spas including day spas, med spas, new wellness concept spas, resort and destination spas, country clubs, health care practices, and more.

NOTE: There seems to be confusion in the spa and wellness industry about the difference between dry salt therapy/halotherapy and Himalayan salt products and Himalayan spa equipment.

At the inaugural launch of the Salt Therapy Association Conference in September 2018, the keynote state-of-the-industry presentation addressed the “myth information” about claims that salt facilities, salt vendors, salt builders, and salt equipment providers are making about the benefits of having Himalayan salt and/or utilizing Himalayan salt in their facilities such as Himalayan salt lamps, Himalayan salt wall décor, Himalayan salt stone massage kits, Himalayan salt beds and other spa equipment and products. These claims range from stating that negatives ions are being released from heating Himalayan salt, acting as air purifiers, cleaning the air for respiratory benefits, and other so-called wellness benefits.

Subsequent to this Keynote Address, the STA published a detailed article and blog about the evidence surrounding this issue and provided specific information regarding the science, research, and testimony from chemists, physicists, and researchers that completely refute any of the claims that are being made. Since the salt therapy industry has not been regulated, there was an open market for those introducing products like Himalayan salt lamps and making various claims, and many followed suit by making the same marketing claims about the benefits of these products without validating the evidence behind these claims. As the wellness industry continued to grow, the evidence-based modalities and the STA’s three principal pillars on Education, Research and Innovation began to pursue their role to research these claims and thus took action informing the industry and its members as noted above. Some of these companies stopped making these claims while others have continued to do so.
However, there still seems to be some confusion about dry salt therapy/halotherapy and Himalayan salt. The efficacy of halotherapy is solely dependent on the equipment that provides and delivers the dry salt aerosol of pure grade sodium chloride into a salt room, chamber, or cave known as a halogenerator. Many of these salt rooms have Himalayan salt as décor and architectural elements, however, there is no benefit as to the efficacy of the Himalayan salt, even when heated, in terms of providing negative ions, respiratory aid, or other benefits. The efficacy of halotherapy is derived from inhaling micronized salt particles and having these particles penetrate the skin. For more of the published medical studies, research and evidence please see: https://www.salttherapyassociation.org/research-articles.

Thus, the Himalayan salt is merely a décor and architectural feature with regards to salt therapy. There are benefits when Himalayan salt is used as a food additive, sole’, and use in spa and beauty applications.

This is being addressed again since there has recently been a federal class action lawsuit filed against such a company making claims on how Himalayan salt provides benefits by producing negative ions, purifying the air, eliminating allergens from the surrounding environment and so forth. If there is no halogenerator there is no dry salt therapy/halotherapy. And heating Himalayan salt does not provide any of the claims that have been communicated and marketed to spas and salt facilities.

This lawsuit can have serious implications for spas and facilities making claims as to the benefits of having these products and/or equipment when providing treatments to their guests and customers. Furthermore, if spas, salt facilities, and other salt therapy providers are selling products making such claims, this too could create serious legal implications and damages. Therefore, it is important that if you have Himalayan salt as a décor and architectural element in your facility, or if you are providing any type of Himalayan salt treatments or using Himalayan salt products and equipment for treatments or selling any retail Himalayan salt products, you must ensure that the language and claims you are marketing and communicating to your guests, clients, customers, and patients are not misleading, inaccurate, or making false assertions.

The Salt Therapy Association is making the following recommendations:

- Please review your treatment menus and list of services to ensure that you are not making any of these alleged claims which you could be culpable for in terms of damages and legal implications since your guests and clients could make claims against you.

- Review all the information on your website and other social media platforms where there may be communication and language making such claims and revise and edit.

- Similarly, please review all of your published literature and collateral items such as brochures, signage and other materials that could have some of these claims being communicated.
• Make sure you have the proper disclaimers posted throughout all of your materials.

• Use Salt Therapy Association’s materials as a source rather than you or your facility.

• If your intention is to provide authentic wellness benefits from dry salt therapy/halotherapy, consider retrofitting or adding the proper equipment to provide the wellness based evidence modality of dry salt therapy/halotherapy.

For a complete list of what these claims are and the language that is being used that is being considered inappropriate and could have potential legal and financial implications, please visit the STA website and read the previously mentioned blog.