

# Used Medical Laser Buyers Guide

## 10 Key Issues to Consider When Buying a Used Medical Laser



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QUALITY AESTHETIC LASERS AT ROCK BOTTOM PRICES

**by Vin Wells, MHSA**

# Medical Laser Buyers Guide

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## About the Author

Vin Wells, MHSA is the President of Rock Bottom Lasers, [www.RockBottomLasers.com](http://www.RockBottomLasers.com) and [www.CosmeticLaserDeals.com](http://www.CosmeticLaserDeals.com) and has extensive experience in the aesthetic laser industry. Mr. Wells started his own chain of aesthetic clinics under the brand name Skinovative and opened his first medical spa in Boise, Idaho in February 2001. From 2001 to 2004, the Boise location realized over a 20% annual rate of growth, exceeding over \$1,000,000 in gross revenue by years end 2004. Subsequently in 2004 and 2005, Mr. Wells opened two additional locations in Arizona (Chandler & Tucson) with annualized store revenues for all three locations exceeding \$3 million by end of year 2005.

Since that time, Mr. Wells has devoted his energies to helping other physicians and entrepreneurs become successful in this industry. Mr. Wells received a masters degree in Health Services Administration from Arizona State University (1995) and has extensive practice management experience, working with a number of different hospital and outpatient care systems.

Mr. Wells has developed a number of business operations systems that help aesthetic clinics to maximize their profitability, including: Aesthetic Consultation Training, Medspa Management Training, Medspa Business Plans, Medspa Operations Manuals, and Front Desk Operations Training. These products can be found at: [www.SkinSalesTools.com](http://www.SkinSalesTools.com)

Mr. Wells completed received his bachelors of Science degree at Brigham Young University in 1991 and continued his education at Arizona State University, in Tempe, Arizona, receiving a Masters in Health Services Administration in 1994. He has worked for a number of different health care organizations including as a Program Director for group of primary care clinics (Arizona Association of Community Health Centers), a Health Care Manager for a hospital network group (Arizona Healthcare Federation), and as Associate Director for the Arizona Council for Graduate Medical Education.

Mr. Wells has devoted considerable time in research the latest cosmetic trends and treatment modalities. He stays current on the cutting edge of such research and uses this information to make strategic decisions for the company. He has a broad understanding of lasers and has been certified in laser biophysics and theory.

Mr. Wells was successful in developing a Laser Certification Program that was approved by the Arizona Radiation Regulatory Agency, the agency that oversees the use of medical lasers in Arizona. The program involves 40 hours of laser didactic curriculum as well as hands-on laser training. Mr. Wells has developed this Laser Buyers Guide to help doctors and aesthetic practices make the right purchasing decisions regarding used medical lasers in their clinics.

### **Key Issue #1: Why Buy a Used Medical Laser?**

When a new piece of equipment hits the aesthetic market, there is often a race to buy this technology quickly and sell treatments to consumers while there isn't as much competition. Consumers in the aesthetic industry tend to be early adopters, jumping on the latest and greatest technology, believing that it will finally be the answer they are looking for. This often happens even when there is very little clinic research to support the claims made by the laser manufacturer regarding the equipment.

Those clinics that buy the latest technology typically must buy it from the manufacturer at top dollar. Sadly, most NEW aesthetic equipment becomes obsolete 2 or 3 years after the initial purchase, however most leases on that same equipment last for 5 or 6 years. Any leasing company will require a personal guarantee., which means that when you "lease" you are really "buying".

In the world of aesthetics, technology is evolving at a rapid pace. This evolution also means that laser equipment does not remain useful for very long. It's a hard pill to swallow when you continue to make monthly lease payments on equipment that has become a "doorstop" inside your practice. If you've paid top dollar for that equipment, it just makes that pill you're swallowing even the more bitter.

If the technology fails to deliver results, this practice now has a piece of equipment that is only worth a small fraction of what you originally paid for it. A practice that plays this strategy for very long will continue to accumulate additional leases and have equipment that delivers very little ROI two or three years into the lease. It doesn't take too many years of doing this until the liabilities on your company balance sheet are consuming your net worth and eating up all of your positive cash flow!

Another key issue is keeping your lease costs down so that you remain competitive. If your practice buys a new medical laser and your competitor buys the same laser pre-owned at a 70% discount, your competitor has a large competitive advantage over you. His fixed costs on capital equipment are 70% less than yours which means higher profit margins for him. He also has the ability to offer lower treatment prices and potentially put you out of business. You also have the option to match his lower prices, but you will need to compensate for the higher costs you are paying on that equipment by having a higher treatment volume. If you choose to keep your prices higher, then you will need to somehow differentiate your practice from the competition by offering other "value-added" benefits that justify your higher prices. This could be "Board Certified Dermatologist" or "Onsite Physician" etc.

## ***The Best Strategy for Buying Medical Lasers***

The best solution to keep up with advancing technology is to wait 18-24 months after a new device is introduced before you purchase anything. When you do buy, **never buy NEW.** Always buy used. This will allow the following benefits:

1. You will let someone else take the hit on depreciation (It will allow you to save 70-80%)
2. It allows you to monitor the reception of this technology in the aesthetic industry and go beyond the hype to find out the level of satisfaction of those doctors who have been using the device for the past 18-24 months and review clinical data. A good way to monitor this is to attend meeting such as the ASLMS and discuss items with other physicians who have the technology at trade shows.
3. If the device appears to be living up to expectations, then this could potentially be a technology to invest in and you will be much better off than the practices who jumped in early and have lost significant money by overpaying for aesthetic equipment.

If you've decided to buy a used medical laser, you've already made a smart decision. You can get a medical laser that's just as good as a brand-new one without paying for the depreciation

that wallops new laser buyers as soon as they fire their first pulse. Even lasers that are less than a year old are 40-50% percent cheaper than brand-new lasers.

## **Key Issue #2: Manufacturer and Broker Warranties**

Laser brokers typically give you a 90 Warranty when you buy a used laser, but they are really just gambling that it won't break down during those 90 days. If it does, they have to get someone to service the laser, get parts etc. so be ready to be down for awhile if this happens. In addition, the cost of the repair is coming out of their gross profit from the sale, so they may wish to drag their feet to avoid paying these costs. A good broker will deal with the issue head-on and get it taken care of immediately. Every day that your laser is not functioning is a day you are losing money and the broker should and must respond QUICKLY to this emergency.

Paying top dollar for new equipment allows peace of mind with warranty protection, but it comes at a very high cost. While it is true that most used laser equipment is no longer under a manufacturer's warranty, research has shown that you are almost ALWAYS better off buying used equipment and paying out of pocket for maintenance and repairs versus buying new and having it covered under warranty. You are simply paying too high of a premium for the luxury of buying new. If peace of mind is the issue, then buy a back-up piece of equipment at a 70% discount that you can rely on when your primary equipment goes down. The reality is you will still be paying less than buying the brand new piece of equipment or a manufacturer's warranty.

The truth about buying manufacturer warranties is this: They are extremely expensive and are written HEAVILY in the favor of the manufacturer. If nothing goes wrong with your laser device while under warranty, you normally have nothing to show for the money you have expended. We call this "vaporware" because the only thing you bought was a little peace of mind for a short period of time. This money can never be retrieved and is forever lost. Instead of buying "vaporware," how about buying a back-up piece of hardware? This will give you peace of mind AND something to actually show for your money.

Laser companies do not like customers buying on the used market. They will treat you like a second class citizen and you will get third rate service and response from them. Depending on what laser you are looking to buy and how much training and upkeep it requires should be the main factors. Certain lasers have a good history of maintenance and others have a poor. It will be important to do your research on which lasers and manufacturers have a history of reliability and quality.

You also need to find out which laser manufacturers are user-friendly to pre-owned equipment. Some manufacturers can charge you a laser "RECERTIFICATION FEE." Recertification fees are sometimes required by the manufacture if the laser device is sold to someone else. The laser manufactures claim it is to ensure the device has not been tampered with, however the real reason is to protect the manufacturer from being undersold by doctors looking to sell their used equipment. Charging a "recertification fee" levels the playing field between the new and used price. These fees can be as high as \$25,000.

## Key Issue #3: Identify 3rd Party Companies Who Can Repair Your Laser BEFORE You Buy

Before you buy a used medical laser, it is critical that you identify third party companies who can repair it. You can't always rely on the manufacturer to support your used laser. As was already mentioned, manufacturers will often turn their back on any doctor who has not purchased a new laser directly from them.

It is important that you find out from your broker who they use to repair the lasers they are selling you. You need to ask them which laser repair companies are "the best" third party repair companies. You want to get names and phone numbers of specific people who have experience repairing the lasers you wish to purchase.

After 90 days of warranty from the broker who sold you the laser, you will be "on your own" and you need to make sure you can continue to get the support you need for your used laser. You need to conduct your own independent research on the internet (I prefer using Google) to find out the following information from third party repair companies:

1. Identify at least 3 or 4 companies who specialize in repairing the used laser you wish to purchase
1. Ask them to provide you with at least 5 or 6 references of people they have recently serviced
2. Find out whether they have laser repair techs who have been **Manufacturer-Certified** to work on your used laser
3. Find out if they can obtain parts for your laser. Many manufacturers make it very hard for anyone outside their network to obtain parts such as laser fibers and dye kits. Don't forget that laser and IPL parts are typically unique to one particular device. Some laser companies won't even warranty the laser for you if it is not purchased directly from them.
4. Find out whether they have the diagnostic software from the manufacturer to trouble shoot problems with the device
5. Ask them to tell you the most common repairs the device needs and a ball park cost to repair the most common problems
6. Whether the company can offer you a third party extended warranty on the laser, how much it costs, and what all it covers.

You need to do this footwork BEFORE you buy. After you buy it can be too late and you may be taking too large of a risk.

## Key Issue #4: Buying From Used Laser Brokers

Here are some things you need to know about the used laser market. First of all, some of the people in it are very shady. Second, it is not standardized like the used car industry. There is not a "blue-book" value for used laser equipment. Prices and quality vary widely across the board. You usually don't get a chance to check out (or test drive) the equipment you are

purchasing. There is no lemon law with used lasers. When you buy it, it's yours. It may be difficult getting your money back if it doesn't perform. Most of these used dealers are not real companies. They are some guy who probably doesn't even have the laser, but is instead brokering it. There are no real warranties with the equipment. The following are things you should look for in a laser broker and ask:

1. ***Does the laser broker actually have the laser in his/her possession or is it a consignment sale?*** If it is a consignment sale, you need to do your own due diligence on what condition the laser is in because you can't always rely on the broker giving you accurate information. Since the broker may have never actually physically seen the device, he/she may not know if there are any flaws with the device. He or she is relying solely on the doctor who owns the device to give him accurate information.

2. ***Has this broker been certified by third parties and received a seal of reliability and ethics?*** Below are a few of the certifications that can be helpful in your assessment:

- **Dotmed.** An online website that certifies laser brokers is Dotmed (found on the internet [www.Dotmed.com](http://www.Dotmed.com)). Find out if your laser broker is Dotmed Certified.
- **Ebay.** Every Ebay seller should have a seller's rating. Find out if your broker has sold on the internet and what his satisfaction rating is. You want to see as close to 100% satisfaction as possible.

These certifications mean a lot to laser dealers and brokers because it validates their good reputation. Brokers and dealers who plan on selling medical lasers for many years to come do not want anything to happen to these ratings because they realize how important they are in selling equipment.

3. ***Has the broker had the equipment inspected by someone qualified to repair the laser prior to shipping?*** Even used lasers cost a lot of money, so it behooves you to make sure the laser that you're buying has been properly inspected prior to purchasing. This should be done by a technician who knows the laser and should be done before you put any money down. Would you buy a used car from a fly by night dealer without having your mechanic look at it? Once it's been purchased, all bets are off. Apply leverage to the broker when you have leverage, and that is prior to purchasing.

Many brokers tout that their laser equipment has been "refurbished." This statement means absolutely nothing if the laser broker cannot provide documentation of the laser's refurbishment. If they claim it has been refurbished, they should be able to send you a checklist of items that have been done to the laser in a matter of minutes via email or fax. If they cannot provide this to you in relatively short order, then nothing has been truly done to this unit.

If you have any doubt as to the laser's condition, you can also ask the broker to shoot a video of the laser in operation, showing the following:

1. The laser being fired
2. The pulse count on the screen
3. The user adjusting the treatment parameters on the screen

4. The serial number of the unit.
5. Any material defects the laser may have that need to be disclosed

The bottom line is this: You want to make sure the laser is in good, operating condition. You need to make sure it is actually functioning. Shooting video these days is extremely easy. You can buy a Flip HD video camcorder for less than \$200 and shoot high resolution video that can be uploaded directly to YouTube in a matter of minutes. Don't let this process intimidate you. You are about to make a very large investment. Asking these items of your broker shouldn't be seen as excessive.

#### 4. *The Importance of a Laser Inspection Checklist*

How do you know if a laser has been inspected or "refurbished"? Ask for a laser inspection checklist that has been completed by someone qualified to perform the inspection. Below is a basic laser checklist **THAT SHOULD BE PERFORMED ON ANY LASER PRIOR TO BEING SOLD TO ANOTHER PARTY:**

#### **Laser Inspection and Maintenance Checklist**

<b>Inspection / Maintenance Item</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>	<b>Tech Initials</b>
1. Check coolant level and add deionized water.		
2. Inspect electrical connections.		
3. Perform power meter calibration check.		
4. If more than 250,000 shots replace deionizer cartridge and DI water.		
5. Inspect and clean internal optics (if applicable)		
6. Replace Xenon flash lamp if power is low and more 250,000 shots.		
7. Inspect footswitch for proper operation.		
8. Verify laser has no leaks after replacing any filters or connections.		
9. Check High Voltage Power Supply.		
10. Verify operation at all power settings.		
Signed: _____ Date: _____		
Laser Repair Company: _____ Phone: _____		

In most cases, the inspection checklist will not have been performed prior to the broker listing the item, however you should make it a condition of the sale that the laser be properly inspected. If you do not require this, you will be buying at your own risk.

5. ***Can the broker provide you with a service report on the laser while it was under the manufacturers warranty?*** In addition to the laser inspection checklist, you should also request any and all laser service reports that documents any maintenance



that has been done on the laser since it was purchased new. Sometimes the selling doctor may no longer have a record of this, however this should also be available from the laser manufacturer. Manufacturers have a responsibility to document all repair and maintenance work that has been done to the laser as part of any warranty they have provided for the laser when it was purchased new.

Brokers can be hesitant to provide you with a serial number of the laser because they do not own the laser. With a serial number you can call the manufacturer and find out where the laser is and sometimes who actually owns the laser. This makes brokers nervous because it means that you can potentially go around them and buy directly from the owner of the laser unit. Such behavior is completely unethical, however it does sometimes happen which is why laser brokers are very careful about providing such information to you.

6. ***Can the broker provide you with at least 5 references within the past 3 months of doctors he has sold to?*** Not every transaction will always run smoothly every time with a broker, however does the broker adjust to problems and ensure that things get back on track to keep the buyer happy? Calling references of recent transactions will allow you to find out from buyer's their level of satisfaction with the broker and whether they would do business with him or her again.

## **Key Issue #5: Choosing the Right Used Laser(s) For Your Practice**

At the beginning of the laser-buying process, many people already know the laser they want. But it's a good idea to stop right now and test your decision with this question: Will this laser fit into my practice and my monthly budget? Buying a laser at the right price is an important first step. Developing a realistic pro forma of the revenue you anticipate generating from this laser is critical. The key word here being realistic. It is important to be sure your revenue numbers are very conservative so you won't have problems getting a solid ROI on your new device. If your revenue numbers can easily support the price you are paying for this unit, then it may be the right laser and the right price.

***Patient Population.*** What kind of population are you serving? gender, age range, ethnic types (Fitzpatrick Skin Types I thru VI), your surrounding competition? There is no true all-purpose laser platform. Make your determination FIRST based on your practice profile, then decide on specific platforms. It is imperative that you objectively identify your market first before making decision on laser machines. This will minimize risks of side effects or poor clinical outcomes or buying the wrong laser platform for your targeted client base.

***Wavelength.*** If you have a patient population of darker skin types and you wish to do laser hair removal, you will need to be sure to have a laser that can treat darker skin, such as a 1064 Nd Yag. On the same token, if you have a patient population of lighter skin types you want a hair removal laser that best treats this patient base, such as an Alexandrite. If you have a mix of all skin types, then perhaps a diode laser with a long pulse width would be the best fit for you.

***Profitability.*** If you want your practice to be profitable, you must focus on HIGH DOLLAR / HIGH MARGIN treatments. In general, the most worthwhile investment to focus on is skin resurfacing, skin tightening and body shaping (laser lipolysis, Radio Frequency). People are willing to spend big dollars to rejuvenate and tighten their face and sculpt their body. Selling

larger packages typically means combination therapy which results in happier clients. It is important that you understand that your goal of increased revenue is aligned with the client wanting the best results possible. Small packages or single treatments typically do not yield good results and the client walks away dissatisfied - never to return!

**Spot size.** The spot size of a laser determines how much skin area can be covered per laser pulse. Lasers with larger spot sizes can cover more area much more quickly. For example, a laser hair removal treatment of the back or full legs could take as long as 2 hours with older lasers. Today, these areas can be completely treated in less than 20 minutes. The spot size not only determines the speed and comfort of the treatment, but the efficacy as well.

**Hertz.** The hertz, or pulses per second, tells you how fast the laser emits each pulse. Some lasers can go as fast as 3 pulses per second, which allows you to cover more surface area faster. This is an important feature, especially for laser hair removal lasers.

**Consumables.** Some aesthetic devices are very expensive to operate, however it may still be worth your while IF you are able to charge higher prices with these same medical devices. Some examples of consumables include: Single use treatment tips, Cryogen Canisters, Coupling Fluid, Lightguides, Handpieces with a certain pulse life, Filters, Fibers, etc. You need to factor in the cost of these consumables as you create your pro forma revenue to determine your break even costs and profits.

### ***Understanding the Technology:***

**3 Key Improvements to the Face:** The 3 Ts. To assist in determining what technology is best for which procedure, we have developed a very simple model that helps the practitioner to know what aesthetic equipment may best fit his practice and his patient population. For simplicity's sake, I use the following rejuvenation model called the "3 Ts".

- a) **Tone** (Even Color). The goals of even color are to eliminate pigmentation and redness (facial veins)
- b) **Texture** (Smooth Skin). The goals of texture are to smooth rough skin and reduce fine lines and wrinkles
- c) **Tighten** (Skin Tightness & Fullness). The goal of tightening is to reduce skin laxity caused by solar elastosis, aging and other skin oxidants.

The following chart diagrams the available aesthetic procedures and their role assisting in one of the three areas of Tone, Texture or Tighten. On a scale of **1 to 3**, a **1** is considered the **most effective treatment** for the designated area of Tone, Texture, or Tighten while a **3** is considered **the least effective treatment**. **2** is considered **middle of the road** and not as effective.

## 3 Key Areas of Improvement to the Face

1 = Best Treatment, 2 = Helpful Treatment, 3 = Least Effective Treatment

Procedure	Tone	Texture	Tighten	Advantages	Disadvantages
Portrait Plasma	3	1	1	Single treatment	5-7 days of downtime
CO2 Fractional	3	1	1	Great results	3-5 days of downtime
RF Fractional	3	1	2	Little to No downtime	Series of treatments
Erbium Fractional Resurfacing	2	1	3	Little to No downtime	Series of treatments
Thermage & Accent RF		2	1	No downtime, %permanent+	Variable results
Permanent Fillers		2	1	Immediate Results	Potential side events
Temporary Fillers		1	2	Immediate Results	Temporary results
IPL	1	2		No downtime	Series of treatments
Botox <sup>i</sup>		1		Quick, predictable results	Temporary results / repeat necessary

In general, for fine wrinkle (crow's feet) you can go with fractional skin resurfacing. For moderate to deeper ones, this is more difficult. You can go with Portrait Rhytec, CO2, Thermage, Velashape or Alma Accent. With Thermage or Accent, you get the added "lifting" effect which work better on the sagging wrinkles/skin as in the jowls or the droopy upper eyelids though a strong full ablative CO2 as in Luminis Active FX can do such for the eyelids.

Sometimes, wrinkles can also be corrected with fillers such as Radiesse, Perlane or Restylane as those on forehead or glabellar. Wrinkles can also result from tissue atrophy in the mid and lower face. In these instances, an AUGMENTATIVE volumizing injection (with Perlane or Radiesse) will stretch out the loose skin thus not only fading out the wrinkles and folds but also giving the lifting effects.

Be sure to ask your broker his opinion of the laser her or she recommends and why. This will help you to determine how knowledgeable the broker is regarding the laser technology they are selling you. Often the broker may have hands-on experience working with the laser in question. If so, that is a plus because it shows the broker has some hands-on laser operations experience.

## Key Issue #6: Do Your Own Research on the Best Lasers & Manufacturers

Most laser reps/brokers know very little about the equipment they are selling, aside from the one-day crash course of single-sided "facts" about their equipment that they could simply get from a datasheet. What is really bothersome is that so many doctors will believe what the reps/brokers say but not do the diligence and research it. Going off of marketing brochures really does not iterate the actual equipment or the workings of the equipment.

Get a technical explanation, if they can do it, of how the laser works. If they can't, then you should really question their ability to know what the laser can do and why. Cost alone should not and should never be a deciding factor in buying a laser. Quality, longevity, repairs / replacements, efficacy and the light delivery methods are far more important than the cost. All too often I see doctors take the cheaper route and end up getting less of a laser that ultimately costs more in the long run, also costing them patients referrals, trust and more replacement parts to keep the laser operating it (thus keeping them in the pocket of the laser maker).

Anyone looking to buy a laser needs to pick up the phone, call around and get technical info on everything you want to consider. I recommend the following company that does an EXCELLENT job in providing laser technical information: Medical Insight. This company has some aesthetic laser charts that provide across the board comparisons of every laser that's out there for every type of aesthetic modality. To download these charts, please go to the following link: <http://www.miinews.com/productcharts.php>

Take your time, be patient, stay in control of your decisions and simply tell the broker exactly what you want. Don't let them guide you into anything else, just make them give you the stats, the facts and their technical support case of why. If they cannot give you these answers on the spot or in a timely manner, say goodbye and move on to a broker and a company who will support you in this expensive and long-term decision.

There are some excellent resources for finding out which lasers are the favorites among physicians. One such resource can be found online at: [www.MedicalSpaMD.com](http://www.MedicalSpaMD.com). This is a blog of aesthetic physicians who discuss very openly their experiences with all of the various manufacturers and equipment that is on the market today. Once you begin reading this information, it will become very clear which manufacturers and which equipment you should stay away from and which equipment is a favorite among the physicians in the group.

I also highly recommend that you sign up for the free webinars that are offered by almost all of the laser manufacturers. These are free, you don't have to travel, and it allows you to get a solid idea of the benefits of the laser technology available. Attending trade shows can also be another great way to learn of the technologies that are in favor with the industry. Two shows that I recommend you attend are the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery ([www.aslms.org](http://www.aslms.org)) and The Aesthetic Show sponsored by Medical Insight ([www.miinews.com](http://www.miinews.com)).

Test-driving a used car helps you decide if it is the right car for you and also if this particular car is in good condition. It may not hurt to rent a laser from the manufacturer before you decide to buy so that you can give it a good "test drive." Find out if this option is available to you. They

may be able to provide you with a demo unit they can rent out to you. This will allow you to find out if the laser is a good fit for your practice.

## **Key Issue #7: Stay Away From Equipment That is "Too Old"**

The newer equipment on the market has become more user-friendly and safer to use. Using older technology can be much more "expertise" driven and in the wrong hands, can have disastrous results. Some of the problems with older technology is inadequate cooling on the skin, a lack of ongoing calibration and maintenance, and a poor user-friendly interface that helps ensure the operator provides a safe treatment. While newer equipment can never replace someone who has been properly trained in the safe user of lasers, it goes a long way to help prevent adverse reactions from occurring in the first place.

Ideally, you want to buy a laser that has seen little use that is no greater than 3 or 4 years old. If you go too far beyond this point, you can run into a lack of third party support for the laser and a lack of people who can repair it or find replacement parts. It can also be too outdated and more dangerous to use. That said, some technology has not changed dramatically over the past 8 or 9 years and it may still be worth a look, laser hair removal being a prime example. If you find a laser with a low pulse count that is an older model unit (Candela Gentlelase for example), find out if the same unit is still manufactured today. If it is, then obsolescence may not be a problem and you can potentially get a really great deal on a very effective and reliable laser.

## **Key Issue #8: Stay Away From Equipment That is Not FDA Approved**

There are several manufacturers from China who are now promoting their aesthetic devices on the internet and Ebay. While it is tempting to try these devices out and buy them due to their inexpensive price tag, it is extremely risky to be using any equipment that is not FDA approved. It is very important to use only FDA approved devices and substances. If anything were to go wrong during the treatment, the fact that a patient was given an FDA approved treatment limits your clinic's liability dramatically.

As long as you follow the guidelines for use with those FDA approved aesthetic devices, you are on very safe ground. A large portion of the liability is shared by the manufacturer, and most plaintiff's go after the entities with the deepest pockets, which are typically the manufacturers. If you are using a medical device that does not have FDA approval, you are on very shaky ground and if trouble arises, you could be the one left "holding the bag."

## **Key Issue #9: Medical Laser Financing**

Once you have found the laser you want to buy, you have three ways to pay for it:

1. **Cash.** Need we say more? Money talks, you know-what walks. If you can close quickly on a laser purchase you can normally negotiate a larger discount. Cash is the fastest way to close on anything and can save you significant dollars if you have it available to

buy a laser. If you have the liquidity, you can bring down the price by promising to pay same day or next day. The ability to buy quickly from the seller always gets their attention and is an excellent way to save money.

2. **Credit Card / PayPal.** Not all laser brokers accept credit cards, but if they do, this is the safest way to go because you can dispute a charge if you're having trouble with the laser or it isn't what you were promised. Always ask the laser broker if you can pay by credit card. If you can't pay the entire amount, perhaps you can pay some percentage of the payment with a credit card, sometimes up to 25 - 50%.
3. **Third Party Leasing.** You will typically pay a higher rate of interest if you choose to finance a used laser, in upwards of 12 to 18%. You need to personally guarantee most laser leases, which isn't fun, and you normally can't pay off the lease early without a prepayment penalty. You need to carefully review any type of lease agreement, especially for pay-off terms. Ideally you would like to have a lease that is similar to a loan in which you can pay it off early without any interest penalties.

It can be difficult to secure a lease, especially with the tightening credit markets. Capital equipment makers, who had seen aggressive growth and comfortable margins before the economic slowdown, were hit hard when tight credit left few physicians available to buy big-ticket items.

## Key Issue #10: Negotiating For a Used Laser

Successful negotiation comes from having solid information. This is particularly true when buying a used laser. Before beginning negotiations you should conduct online research on the availability and price of the lasers you are looking for. An excellent resource for the value of used laser equipment is [www.Dotmed.com](http://www.Dotmed.com). If a certain kind medical laser is for sale, it is normally available on Dotmed. You should be able to get an average asking price for the laser you are looking to purchase. You can use this information as a basis for negotiating the price if it appears that the broker's asking price is too high. Knowledge is power, and this is especially true in the used laser market.

If brokers justify a higher price because the laser is in good condition, it has a low pulse count, or it has been recently "refurbished" or serviced, then you need to ask them to provide documentation or proof of such claims. In many cases, brokers will often raise their prices slightly to allow discounts when a buyer asks for one. Keep in mind that the critical issue is not to just get a discount for discount's sake, but rather to buy the laser at or below the prevailing market value. Follow these guidelines when negotiating:

- Only enter into negotiations with a broker with whom you feel comfortable and who may have been recommended by a fellow physician.
- Make an opening offer that is low, but in the ballpark.
- Decide ahead of time how high you will go and back away when your limit's reached.

In addition to negotiating the price, you should also be aware of what standard accessories should come with the laser. You need to require that the broker is very clear what is included in the price. Common accessories are: Keys, Operators Manuals, Treatment Parameters Guide, Operator Eyewear, Patient Eyewear, Footswitch, Cryogen, Treatment Tips, Light Guides, and Hand pieces, Additional Fibers, Water Refill Kits.

To be safe, some lasers should be installed by a laser service technician after it is delivered to your practice. Ask your broker if this service can be offered with your laser purchase. This usually costs extra, however it can be very worthwhile to ensure that the unit is set up properly and that no accidental misuse occurs. If you have never operated the laser you intend to purchase, this is especially important. You should also make arrangements for training if you have never operated this laser. The laser broker can often arrange for training and you can ask that he build the cost of training into the purchase price of the laser.

Once an agreement has been made, you need to make sure the broker provides you with a detailed invoice that includes all items you will be receiving along with any guarantees that are being provided. If the laser includes a warranty, be sure the warranty is clearly spelled out regarding exactly what it covers and the time period. Once this is complete, it is time to prepare for shipping the laser to your clinic. Be sure to verify that shipping insurance is provided on the laser during transit for the full purchase price. Your worst nightmare would be the laser is damaged during shipment and you cannot get your money back from the broker. Having insurance allows for reimbursement in the event an accident happens during transit.

## **Conclusion**

Buying a used medical laser can save you a lot of money, however you need to do your homework to make sure you don't get burned. You can get a used laser that's just as good as a new one without paying for the depreciation that hits new laser buyers as soon as they fire their first pulse.

It is important to identify 3rd party companies who can repair your laser BEFORE you buy and be selective in working with the right laser broker whom you can trust. Take the time to choose the right lasers for your practice and do your own research on which lasers and manufacturers are the easiest to deal with. Stay away from equipment in which the technology has been surpassed by better, newer equipment on the market and technology that is not FDA approved.

If you can buy a laser at a cheap enough price, then it is best to either buy it with cash or credit card versus a lease program. Leasing often has heavy pre-payment penalties that are very burdensome. Come prepared to effectively negotiate for your laser by knowing current market values and laser comparables. This will help ensure that you are not taken advantage of. Thank you for using this laser buyers guide. We hope it will help you in your next laser purchase!