



Dr Ingrid Tall, a doctor with a difference—she's passionate about encouraging wellness to prevent illness, using the latest cosmetic technology to raise self-esteem and making her health spa the best in the country.

Trailblazing MD

Kirien Withers met the doctor behind Aquarius Health and MediSpa, Dr Ingrid Tall, and found her to be an awe-inspiring creative force.

Dr Ingrid Tall is no ordinary GP (whether or not you take into account her 20 years of cosmetic medical experience). She has been a medical journalist and host for numerous radio and television shows, written for Reuters international, been a competitive swimmer, served as the President of the Australian Medical Association Queensland and headed up numerous associations and committees, designed and taught university courses, been a finalist for the Executive Woman of the Year Award and currently has four children under the age of six with her life partner.

She is also the founder and director of Aquarius Health and MediSpa in Brisbane, incorporating Cosmetic Image Clinic where she treats clients daily, while still undertaking night shifts at Brisbane's North West Private Hospital. And she doesn't look old enough to have achieved even half of it.

DR INGRID'S FULL BIOGRAPHY IS AVAILABLE IN THE "CURRENT ISSUE" SECTION OF SPA AUSTRALASIA.COM.AU. (BUT BEWARE; YOU MAY NEED TO TAKE A NANA NAP AFTER READING IT.)



Aquarius is a full-service day spa with indoor heated pool; warm and cold plunge pools; steam room and dry sauna; and fitness centre offering aerobics and boxing classes, meditation and yoga.

In the clinic, Ingrid expertly assesses clients' features and makes recommendations from an extensive cosmetic service menu that includes dermal fillers, botulinum toxin (Botox) injection, fractional laser resurfacing, chemical peels, microdermabrasion, cosmetic mole removal and fat-busting therapies.

As well as body maintenance and aesthetic grooming, clients can attend to inner balance with the psychologist, acupuncturist, dietician and naturopath. And soon to come is colonic irrigation to serve digestive health.

Is Aquarius the spa of the future we've so often talked about? I think it could be.

As a child on family holidays in Europe, Ingrid and her German mother would spend hours in the traditional multi-storey kurs of Europe.

PLANTING THE SEED

So what led Ingrid to establish this out-of-the-box facility at the forefront of our industry? She explains that the seeds were planted when, as a child on family holidays in Europe, she and her German mother would spend hours in the traditional multi-storey kurs of Europe, where whole families would enjoy the traditional cure of bathing and steaming.

Throughout her adult years, the memory of the health and relaxation benefits of the spa experience stayed with her, even though her busy lifestyle kept her from getting to the spa as often as she would have liked. One day, mid treatment, she said to her partner, “You know, I would love to own something like this!”

The spa model fits well with Ingrid’s passion for facilitating wellness and self-esteem. “In my early days as a medical student I regularly used integrative therapies such as Traditional Chinese Medicine and acupuncture,” she says, going on to explain that as her studies took her deeper into orthodox western medicine her interest in alternative therapies waned, until, as a researcher, her interest was piqued when she noted that placebos alone achieve on average a 30 per cent success rate—higher than that of many actual treatments.

“It was impossible for me not to accept the power of belief,” says Ingrid. “It should not be underestimated but actively encouraged. Even if a therapy or procedure is not strictly indicated for success, believing can make it so.”

Ingrid’s idea to ‘own something like this’ became a reality when a health club in Brisbane’s downtown Mary Street came up for sale. “The space and facilities had the essential water, fitness and health spa components in place, and there was room to integrate my clinic and create a variety of treatment, consulting and activity rooms.”

SERVICE INTEGRATION AND UTILISATION

Aquarius has now been open a year. Currently, the Cosmetic Image Clinic is the key driver of the business, though the clinic had been in operation for the previous five years in another location.

“Education is still necessary before Australians will readily adopt a one-stop mentality for fitness, wellness, beauty and cosmetic medical,” Ingrid says. “People come in for one aspect of our service and look around with interest at what else we have available but we have to encourage them to step out of their box and try new things, or perhaps come to us for services they are accustomed to going elsewhere for.”

Ingrid adds that she has intentionally created a spa for all people. “I think that one of the industry’s problems is that it still has a ‘for the privileged’ vibe that stops the average person from seeing that a spa is something they can make an important part of their lifestyle, just as the Europeans or Asians do in their own cultures,” she says. “That is what Aquarius is all about.”

Ingrid sees the integration of cosmetic and aesthetic medicine



Kerstin Florian adds the ultimate skin and muscle workout to their facials with cryotherapy (cold therapy) delivered by these easy to use beauty globes.



Aquarius seamlessly achieves the difficult task of integrating go-go-go fitness facilities with the hush of the spa side.

“The boom in cosmetic technology means profound results are becoming more accessible and affordable for the average person.”

as a necessary component of complete body wellness. “Raising an individual’s self-esteem and self-confidence is the main reason I love cosmetic medicine, because how people feel about the way they look so much affects how they feel overall. It is very rewarding to see someone light up when they feel that their appearance matches their spirit.”

Ingrid acknowledges that ageism and sexism is still a part of the contemporary zeitgeist. “Though it sounds superficial to talk about the importance of looking good in today’s world, it is very real.” She proposes that appearance has significant impact upon daily experience and success in negotiation. “We are experiencing such a boom in cosmetic technology, it is extremely exciting to be part of profound results becoming more accessible and affordable for the average person”.

THE CHALLENGES AND THE FUTURE

Ingrid also isn’t too reticent to discuss her major challenges in creating such a complex facility. “There are no business classes in medical school—doctors have to learn how to run a business ‘on the run,’” Ingrid says. “I understand from my staff that it is a similar situation in the spa, wellness and beauty education systems.”

She explains that, with little formal education on the business of running a spa, salon or retreat, once staff are employed in these complex and expensive operations it is difficult for them, as it is for me, to understand the business’s key performance indicators, cash flow forecasting and budget management. “Spa maintenance and labour costs are high, profit margins are tight and we all need to fully understand the business in order to perfect our systems and have the motivation to adhere to procedures even when we

are under the pump, in order to maintain profitability,” Ingrid reveals candidly. “As therapists and practitioners we are motivated by the highest ideals and can deliver brilliant customer service, but that is not enough to keep the doors open and enjoy appropriate compensation for our efforts including keeping wages going up and our industry growing. It’s a team effort—we all have to be skilled in, or at least understand, the machinations of business as well.”

Ingrid is still positive about the path Aquarius is on. “Every day we see more users accessing the fitness centre. Our main demographic [40 to 60-plus women] is rapidly expanding their use of our services, trying out different aspects of our offer.” Ingrid is seeing uptake in other, less traditional, sectors too. “It’s not just the metrosexuals any more; the mining guys are getting their ‘bro-tox’ and even fillers. With all our clients, seeing their enjoyment and the appreciation of the results they are achieving in their appearance, their stress levels, their health and their self-esteem is exactly what inspired me to be here.”

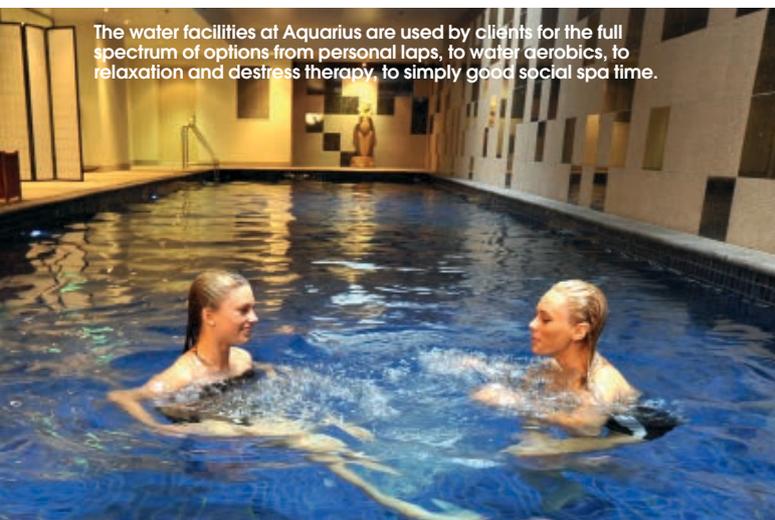
Ingrid’s long-held passion for enriching people’s lives also continues to increase. Her next steps will include integrating additional personal growth courses and life-balancing programs into the service mix. “Making a difference in the lives of busy people, so that they can make a difference in the lives of others, is very rewarding.”

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VIEW A VIDEO OF DR INGRID TALL PERFORMING A SCULPTRA FACIAL TREATMENT IN THE “CURRENT ISSUE” SECTION ON SPA AUSTRALASIA.COM.AU



The water facilities at Aquarius are used by clients for the full spectrum of options from personal laps, to water aerobics, to relaxation and desress therapy, to simply good social spa time.



Being an all-in-one accessible and affordable destination to help anyone maintain health and vitality and enjoy the confidence that comes with looking and feeling their best is the mission of Aquarius.

