

# INTERNATIONAL *therapist*

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Issue 133

## *Man Kind*

Supporting the  
wellbeing of  
male clients



Down at heel –  
An introduction to  
plantar fasciitis

.....

The skin collaborative  
– Two FHT members  
come together in  
business





Harley Street entrance



FHT members **Vanessa Jane Davies** and **Emma Holly** join forces so their clients can benefit from skin camouflage and ScarWork™.

# The Skin Collaborative

**H**oping to hit the ground running when life returns to normal, Vanessa Jane Davies and Emma Holly have come together at Vanessa's Harley Street practice, Skin Camouflage Services, to offer their clients a truly unique service.

Inspired by an article written by Emma about ScarWork (published in *International Therapist*, Issue 125), Vanessa decided to attend Emma's four-day course on the therapy to discover the benefits first-hand.

Vanessa is a para-medical skin camouflage consultant providing skin camouflage consultations, rehabilitation assessments and expert witness opinion to the Courts. She holds clinics in five locations across the country, including her flagship clinic at 10 Harley Street. Vanessa also receives referrals to treat serving military personnel affected by scarring.

## Considering a collaboration

Vanessa said, 'Before attending Emma's training, I had not been able to signpost my clients to scar massage therapy because there were no therapists with this skillset in my area. It became clear from observing, listening and following Emma's techniques that ScarWork could offer a pathway for my clients to access specialist support for their scars. It was a light bulb moment when I realised if myself and Emma were to collaborate, we could offer a truly holistic service to those affected by scarring.'

Emma said, 'Vanessa attended my ScarWork course in November 2019 and we immediately had a mutual respect. On the day of the final class, we had lunch together to discuss how ScarWork could be incorporated into legal reports and recommendations. Vanessa said that for years she had read medical reports advising patients to have scar massage and scar management, but she had no contacts to refer them to for treatment.

'Vanessa posed the question on collaboration, highlighting that she alone wouldn't have the time to handle the anticipated demand for ScarWork treatments in her Harley Street clinic. I took time to consider the offer and quickly realised it was too good an opportunity to turn down. I got in touch with Vanessa in December to see if she would be happy for us to work together.'

## The finer details

Vanessa said, 'Soon after Emma called to take up my offer on collaborating, I invited her to my Harley Street practice. Our ideas began to flow, with discussions about how clients at Skin Camouflage Services could benefit from Emma's experience. By February 2020 we had agreed our ways of working and had a contract put in place.'

Emma said, 'It is easy to get used to working alone and to be cautious about letting someone into a business you have spent years building. I think it's



**VANESSA – SKIN CAMOUFLAGE**

My career as a para-medical skin camouflage expert began to take shape many moons ago when I was approached by an incredibly innovative self-funding GP practice in Yorkshire. The team recognised gaps in the availability of services and therapies they could signpost their patients to, one of those services being skin camouflage. Seeing the difference I was making to the lives of those affected by visible skin issues motivated me to share the benefits of skin camouflage more widely. It was at that point I sold both my salons and began developing standards and innovations into the practical application of para-medical skin camouflage.

I then qualified as a higher education lecturer and assessor, enabling me

to take this specialist field to UK and International students. In 2007 I launched Skin Camouflage Services in Harley Street which was the first and only provider of services such as rehabilitation assessments, tuition and expert opinion to the courts relating to para-medical skin camouflage. Skin Camouflage Services quickly drew attention from health care providers, medical professionals and the legal profession.

Always searching for the ultimate skin camouflage colour match, I wanted to offer my clients the perfect match coverage for their particular skin difference whether due to scarring, birthmarks or pigment disorders such as vitiligo. I worked with chemists to develop my own unique formulas and colour matching system, with Varma Cover Cream launching in 2010. By 2015 Varma had become Varma International Ltd



selling cover creams worldwide.

My medico-legal work began in 2007. As a practicing vetted member of the UK Register of Expert Witnesses and first tier member of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers, my role brought me into the field of personal injury, clinical negligence and case management across the UK. I am an individual member of the Expert Witness Institute and have maintained my expert witness training with both EWI and Bond Solon. Furthermore, I am proud to raise the profile of my profession as a Guest Speaker across a range of medical, military and legal audiences.



important to find someone who you can be completely honest with, as freedom to speak easily and frankly without fear of upsetting them is essential. Having similar expectations on timescales is

very important, so one person does not feel like they are doing all the work, or forever awaiting a response. What was different about Vanessa over other opportunities for collaboration, was →

**Above:** Vanessa, fourth from left in the back row, finishing her ScarWork course with Emma, far right in the bottom row.



**EMMA - SCARWORK**

I attended Sharon Wheeler's ScarWork training in 2015, when it was virtually unheard of in the UK.

After becoming certified, I found myself offering a totally new therapy service which came with positives and negatives; people aren't looking to book a treatment if they have never heard of it but on the plus side, there was no competition.

ScarWork is a gentle management technique used on scar tissue to help promote change. It doesn't just work to support the visible scar, but also the fibrosis (thickening) and adhesions (sticking) that can occur in the underlying tissue. The therapy is ideal for scar tissue from any trauma such as surgery, injury or a burn.

Having completed ScarWork training I was suddenly seeing astounding results in clinic. Clients with scars decades old were reporting improvements such

as colour change, pain reduction and improved sensation. Emotionally there were improvements as well, clients previously unable to touch the scar started to self-massage the area. Clients were able to look in the mirror and speak about the scar without becoming tearful. My days in clinic suddenly became much more varied and much more rewarding.

I was driven to become more vocal, I realised that I needed to raise awareness so began networking and started to gain a reputation. In 2016 I had an article on ScarWork published in the Daily Mail and launched my own YouTube channel to communicate the benefits.

At the end of 2016 Sharon Wheeler asked if I would consider teaching, I felt privileged to be asked and completed my training in 2017. A year later, my teaching business had begun to grow, I had 150 therapists attend my courses and almost 450 members of the public use the course clinics to access free scar treatments. The administration was mounting, and I felt exhausted trying to balance this



alongside additional voluntary projects and offering ScarWork for Invictus Games participants.

By 2019 I realised I had to reduce my clinic hours to redress the balance in my life. Rather than lose my client base, I invited a handful of the therapists I had trained to come work at my Harpenden clinic. Kirsty Birnie, John Baker and Rachel Gray joined Restore Therapy and I reduced my clinical time down to two days a week.

■ Emma Holly contributed an article about ScarWork therapy in *International Therapist*, issue 125. Read the full article at [fht.org.uk/international-therapist-archive](http://fht.org.uk/international-therapist-archive)

**Benefits to clients**

Emma said, 'Many of Vanessa's clients have scars that are tight, uncomfortable and cause ongoing problems. They need scar management, physical therapy, to improve their situation and better manage the complications as a result of the injury. A ScarWork treatment, delivered by an experienced therapist trained in these specialist techniques was a perfect solution.'

Vanessa said, 'Since 2015 we have been prescribing the use of silicone scar therapy products to help soften and flatten scarring alongside our skin camouflage applications, to ensure clients can still reap the benefits of silicone therapy for their scars without compromising the quality of their skin camouflage. Until now, we have not been able to signpost our clients to specialist scar massage therapy. With the addition of Emma and ScarWork to our repertoire of scar management techniques we can together offer a truly holistic service to those affected by scarring.'

that her commitment and ambition matched mine.

'Both of us are very motivated individuals; once we are going to do something we don't sit around. Talking finances took a little time, but we were both able to be honest and transparent about what we needed for each of us for the project to be mutually beneficial. By January 2020 I was submitting documentation to complete the Harley Street licence application, and everything was finalised by early March.'

**The future**

Vanessa said, 'Emma and I are both itching to begin our work together but are currently curtailed by the COVID-19 virus. In the meantime, we are working hard behind the scenes to ensure that with our combined skills, we are ready to help those living with scarring to feel more comfortable with their appearance both physically and aesthetically.'

Emma said, 'I was planning to be working in Harley Street from the end of March. It is regretful I have not yet started treatments in London due to the COVID-19 crisis but in the meantime, I have been working to create more

promotional opportunities to promote the growth of the new Harley Street clinic.'

**Conclusion**

Vanessa said, 'Despite taking very different careers paths, it is clear from our stories that Emma and I are both motivated by the same goal - to improve the lives and confidence of people living with skin differences. We are successful businesswomen both facing the challenge of balancing work and family life, while determined to share the benefits of our therapies with the world.'

'We believe this collaboration will offer a unique and highly professional para-medical service to those affected by scarring. Professional standards are incredibly important to us, which is why being members of FHT is key in ensuring that our clients are protected from those who fall short with their professional education and training standards.'

'I encourage any therapist considering a collaboration to give it a go if they feel it is right for them, their clients and their therapy. My advice would be to take the time to consider every aspect but never rule it out due to being afraid of the risk, if we don't innovate how will we grow?'