



**SALON TODAY
INVESTIGATES
BRAZILIAN
keratin
services**

THIS EMERGING CATEGORY HAS PEOPLE TALKING. SALONS, MANUFACTURERS, CLIENTS, CONSUMER PRESS AND BLOGGERS ARE ALL ABUZZ: **"WHERE ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES? WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS?"** THIS FIRST IN A SERIES OF **SALON TODAY** SPECIAL REPORTS GOES **IN DEPTH** TO GET THE INFO AND ANSWERS YOU NEED TO **FORM YOUR OWN OPINIONS** ON THE MOST CURRENT—AND MOST CONTROVERSIAL—TOPICS IMPACTING BEAUTY AND BUSINESS. **By Victoria Wurdinger**

Spend a little time Googling “keratin services” or “Brazilian keratin treatment” and you’ll find a dizzying amount of website postings. Sort through enough of them and you’ll likely come to this conclusion: Consumers are interested in the service because it promises to make curly, frizzy and even damaged hair sleek, smooth and healthy looking. With service tickets averaging \$300-\$600, and reaching as high as \$800, many salons want to meet this demand and offer keratin treatments. But they are unsure how and where to find credible facts, products and education.

To add to the confusion, online surfers will find an assortment of strong claims, both positive and negative, with likely exaggerations on both sides.

So where do you search next? If you are a salon owner interested in adding Brazilian-type keratin services to your menu, or if you have clients asking questions about it, you need to dig deeper. Gather facts and education from professional salon industry sources, then meet with your team to discuss what you learn.

“There is no formaldehyde in Brazilian keratin products. Some brands contain formalin (methylene glycol), which can convert to formaldehyde vapor when heated to high temperatures with flatirons.”

—Doug Schoon

›What It Is, Where It Started

Keratin treatments to smooth hair began in rural Brazil more than 10 years ago. Someone discovered that certain preservative chemicals seemed to link keratin to hair, resulting in frizz-free locks that lasted for months. This got the attention of Brazilian cosmetic manufacturers, who began testing and formulating.

Researchers discovered that when the cuticle is open, the protein keratin can be introduced, along with cosmetic-grade formaldehyde, which is known to cross-link proteins in hair. Then, the cuticle is sealed with multiple-pass flatironing at 450 degrees. During the flatironing, the heat can cause fumes to be released. This step—the fumes—is the center of the keratin treatment confusion and controversy.

›Facts and Fiction

According to Doug Schoon, a chemist and president of Schoon Scientific in Dana Point, California, any keratin treatment product that supposedly contains formaldehyde actually uses an ingredient called formalin. Formaldehyde is a gas and, as such, can’t be a liquid, so could not be added as a cosmetic ingredient.

Schoon explains that formalin is created when dry formaldehyde gas is reacted with water to create a new and different substance called methylene glycol.

“Methylene glycol is a totally different chemical with completely different properties and characteristics,” he says. “For years, this name mistake has been made around the world by scientists, doctors and regulators, until last December when formalin’s name was officially changed in the International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients (INCI) dictionary.”

“When you heat formalin,” Schoon adds, “it can convert back into the original form and release a small amount of formaldehyde gas in the air.”

Schoon is currently working with a manufacturer to measure the amount of formaldehyde fumes stylists may be exposed to when using flatirons with formalin-containing products. He says it’s possible cosmetologists who perform service after service may be exposed to excessive levels, but very likely a source-capture ventilation system can reduce those levels, effectively removing the gas from the air before it’s inhaled.

Online postings about formaldehyde being an irritant and potential carcinogen are correct. It’s associated with nasal and brain cancer, according to the National Cancer Institute. However, most posters aren’t aware it’s a gas released during some keratin treatments, and the FDA does not regulate the amount of formalin in cosmetics, making the >>>

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER’S VIEWPOINT

Controversy over chemical services and potential impact on clients and salon professionals is not new.

IN THE ‘80s, salon profit smelled like perm solution, before shifting to a formula of semi-, demi- and permanent color. Powder and gel nails enhanced new service dollars, but also fresh concerns over fumes, exposure and ingredients. Eyelash tinting and extensions have raised eyebrows in recent years.

Throughout it all, the professional beauty industry has **advocated for the protection of its practitioners and their clients**, but also for solid education, fair dialogue and a balanced presentation of the facts behind services that can help salons sustain and grow business.

In 20 years of covering professional beauty, I cannot recall a single topic or product category generating such a strong—and strongly divided—response as this new, keratin-based chemical service.

- › Some salons have added the service, and are thrilled with the new dollars and new clients.
- › Others won’t touch it—citing the formaldehyde, or more accurately, the cosmetic-grade formalin, that preserves the keratin on the cuticle.
- › A few, including **Graciela Santiler-Nowik** of Chicago (see sidebar on page 33), began researching the category when they first heard of it. She used what she learned as an opportunity to not only bring in new business, but also to **upgrade her ventilation and staff safety procedures for all chemical services**.

The bottom line is there are multiple opinions and companies swirling about this new category. Insiders at America’s Beauty Show (ABS) estimate 12 or more companies will exhibit the category at their event at the end of March. One of these, a leader in the segment, claims 6,000 salons across every U.S. state and 25 countries carry their line.

Ultimately, you need to understand keratin treatments. Follow-up at industry trade shows, contact peer salons you trust, and share your thoughts with SALON TODAY Editor Stacey Soble and me.

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IN DEPTH BRAZILIAN keratin services

The average price being charged by salons across the U.S. ranges from \$300-\$600 per service.

discussions of “legal amounts” in bottles moot. Regulation occurs through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which has strict guidelines for maximum allowable worker exposure to formaldehyde gas.

Food and Drug Association (FDA) spokesperson, Suzan Curzan, e-mails: “The FDA doesn’t have specific regulations that prohibit or restrict the use of formaldehyde [formalin] in cosmetic preparations, and is unaware of safety data indicating that Brazilian keratin products pose a health hazard to consumers, under the labeled conditions of use.”

That’s why, for instance, the FDA takes no issue with nail hardeners containing up to 5-percent formalin. These products are more than a “coating,” says Schoon. “Formalin is reactive to proteins and creates a chemical link or bridge with them.”

Like the second step of a perm process, keratin treatments with formalin don’t break bonds in the hair, but do “fix” the keratin in place, semi-permanently. Whether ingredients other than formalin act identically is unclear.

Second Generation Products

The success—and confusion—about Brazilian-style keratin products opened the door for a slew of “formalin-free” formulations, currently calling themselves “formaldehyde-free.” But keratin alone cannot create the desired, long lasting, “frizz-busting” results.

So the theory is that some “free” formulas simply use different chemical compounds. Chemists say they can’t be sure if the “free” products create a potentially

hazardous gas or not when heated, unless they test the surrounding air during use.

Nine years ago, QOD Cosmetic, a dominant cosmetic firm in Brazil, was one of the first companies to create a professionally produced Brazilian keratin product. According to Niko Johnson, CEO of San Francisco-based QOD USA, under EU and international labeling standards, his brand could claim to be “free,” but doesn’t.

“It’s not that complicated to get other compounds to transform into formaldehyde,” says Johnson. “They convert when you flatiron the hair. Any Brazilian-style keratin treatment product sold to stylists should require identical protocols and precautions, whether it’s called ‘free’ or not.”

According to Johnson, all currently marketed Brazilian-type keratin treatments either:

1. Use formalin.
2. Use a compound that reacts in a similar manner when heated (this includes his brands).
3. Contain keratin and incorporates flat-ironing, but has no chemicals similar to formalin, thus doesn’t last very long.

The lesson? Know which of the three types you have, because there can be huge differences in results and effects.

Safety First

Mark Garrison, who offers what he calls the “real deal” at his namesake Manhattan salon, says you need formalin to get the hair straight, and laments lack of transparency.

“You need 450-degree irons for Brazilian keratin treatments to work,” adds Garrison, whose stylists use canister masks and perform the service in a custom-ventilated area. >>> PAGE 34

AN ASSOCIATION WEIGHS IN

THE PRO BEAUTY ASSOCIATION recently issued an Industry Advisory on Brazilian-type keratin treatments. To read it in its entirety, go to www.probeauty.org



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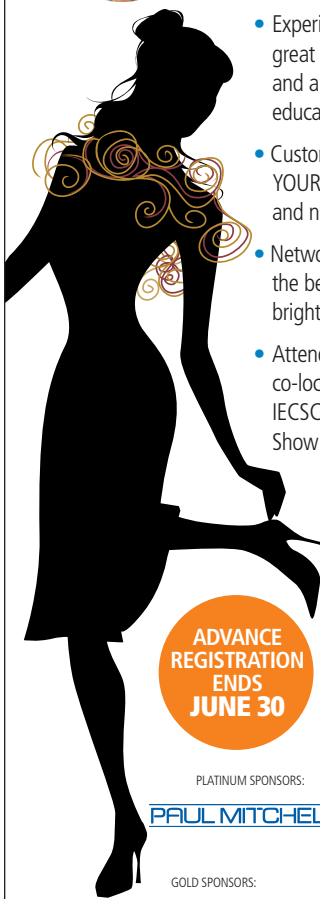
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IN DEPTH, IN THE SALON

Graciela Santiler-Nowik

Hair Base, Chicago, IL
www.HairBaseSalon.com

ST: When did you first add keratin treatments at your salon?

GSN: "Three years ago this June. We are a "neighborhood" salon on the north side of Chicago. We were one of the first salons in Chicago to adopt and publicize the service."

ST: How did you learn about the service, and how did you research or test it?

GSN: "Four years ago, we were doing a lot of hair extension classes. An educator from Miami told me about a new process coming from South America. I started looking for information. Finally, at a show in Florida, I found a lone manufacturer with a tiny booth. I spent three hours there. Later, I traveled to get certified before ultimately bringing a certification class into the salon for the entire team."

ST: What do you charge for the service?

GSN: "Between \$300 and \$600, based on length and density of hair. It takes an average of two hours, and we always work in tandem to be efficient."

ST: How many of these services are you selling per week?

GSN: "At least two per week. I've seen a slight dip because of the economy and some increased competition. But we've used this service to attract new business and clients. We promoted it heavily online, through beauty sites and forums. There's always someone coming to us from out of state."

ST: You are very involved in Cosmetologists Chicago and Cosmetologos Latinos associations, as member and past president. What are your colleagues telling you about this service?

GSN: "At first, a lot of people were scared. They made judgments without having all the information. Now, it seems almost everyone is on board. For instance, the Mario Tricoci salons here in Chicago now offer the service."

ST: When another salon owner finds out you've been having success with keratin treatments, what questions do they ask?

GSN: "How's it going, what do you charge and what about the formaldehyde."

ST: Do you take any extra or special precautions?

GSN: "We revamped our entire ventilation system. We needed to do it anyway, because of the Japanese straighteners and other chemical services we offer. We went a step further and said, "Let's really protect ourselves." I researched and found a lab safety supplier, and picked a multi-gas, carbon mask to wear. It filters out ammonia, peroxides, thio and, of course, formaldehyde or formalin. These are multiple-use masks with replaceable cartridges. They cost \$60 each. Our entire team now wears the mask for all chemical services, including basic color. We also offer masks to clients to wear for all services. Many have started to do so, but their exposure is so minimal."

ST: How did clients react?

GSN: "We educate them. We do thorough consultations for all keratin treatments and other non-traditional services before we will even book them. We explain how low their exposure is, and that we are taking extra precautions because we are exposed on a daily basis."


"I'll admit that it was a strange feeling for some to come into a salon and have hairdressers wearing these masks. But over time, they understand. When your nose is only seven inches away from those fumes, it is hard not to get that into your lungs, no matter what the chemical is. This is a trend I think more hairdressers and salons will keep moving toward. It should start and be taught in school. It's a new era of responsibility and wellness. Clients will adapt, respect and even appreciate it."



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Dear Professional,

Consumers will be spending \$65 billion on beauty products by 2012. What will your share be?

As part of this new incarnation of the Symposium, PBA is pleased to announce a landmark study of the beauty industry and the consumer voice. Utilizing significant resources and taking nearly a year to complete, this is the first study of its kind to be conducted, and one that may fundamentally change what we know about our industry. It was designed to reveal best practices and consumer buying habits, and to provide information that will guide and shape the next iteration of the professional beauty industry. You won't want to miss the results of this study!

Save the date! While July may seem a long way off, the 2009 PBA Symposium, being held July 18-21 in Las Vegas, will be here before you know it. Attending this event is one of the smartest business moves you can make. Now held in conjunction with Cosmoprof North America (CPNA) and the North American Hairstyling Awards (NAHA), the annual PBA Symposiums regularly draw salon and spa owners, as well as manufacturers, distributors and other beauty professionals. This year's Symposium will set a new standard of excellence for delivering upper-level business education and unlimited networking, as well as valuable insights into the contemporary beauty consumer. I encourage you to mark your calendar now so you don't miss it.

PBA Symposium will also continue to feature:

BEACON: To help promote the industry stars of tomorrow, the BEACON program provides an amazing opportunity for cosmetology students to network and interact directly with industry leaders to gain insights on how to jumpstart their career, market themselves effectively, and successfully operate a business. Entries for BEACON are due March 1, 2009. [probeauty.org/beacon](http://probeauty.org/ beacon).

Best Practice Club (BPC): The Best Practice Club is a "by invitation only" group that brings together the nation's leading salon owners, with gross income over \$2.5 million. Members of the BPC will meet to discuss consumer trends, employment issues, and overall best practices that help a business thrive. probeauty.org/bpc.

NAHA: Celebrating its 20th anniversary, NAHA is the most prestigious hairstyling competition in North America. Don't miss this star-studded Awards Ceremony on July 19, 2009. probeauty.org/naha.

By investing in yourself, your business and PBA, you will have a better chance of weathering economic uncertainties and prospering during these difficult times. For more information, please visit probeauty.org.

Lee Rizzuto, Jr.
Chair of PBA Governing Council

The Professional Beauty Association (PBA) is made up of salons and spas, distributors and manufacturers dedicated to improving their individual businesses and the industry as a whole. Led by industry volunteers, PBA offers: business tools · education · government advocacy · networking and more. Visit probeauty.org to learn more.

**Figure from the Professional Beauty Association's 2008 "A National Profile of the Salon Industry"*

IN DEPTH BRAZILIAN keratin services

Omar Roth, co-owner of **O Salon** in Greenwich, Connecticut, worried about health effects and after due diligence, selected a "free" brand.

"It removes about 70-percent of frizz and wave and doesn't last quite as long as the original formulas, but the results are still amazing," says Roth, whose former printing-plant salon space has industrial ventilation. "We do about eight treatments a week now."

J.B. Veltman, who owns an eponymous salon in Coconut Grove, Florida, says some brands he tested lasted just until the next shampoo. He now educates for a company that openly shares the percent of formalin in the product.

"I've been using it for years in a well-ventilated studio salon with a de-fumer at the station," says Veltman, who along with his clients, wears a mask during the treatment. "No matter which brand you use, the same precautions apply."

►Choosing a Brand

If you're shopping for a keratin treatment line, common sense mandates working with a reputable distributor or manufacturer and avoiding eBay or other online-only options. Request and require a Materials Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) so you can read the hazards identification section. Ask your vendor about specific

ingredients, then research them yourself in a cosmetics ingredients dictionary or online.

Next, perform product tests in a well-ventilated area. Use gloves and a canister mask for formalin-containing product tests (particulate masks aren't

effective with gases). Compare results to expectations. Call other salon-users to discuss pros and cons.

►Vent, Vent, Vent

Whether you choose a "free" brand or not, professionals stress appropriate ventilation, including a source-capture

Regardless of the system, use gloves and source-capture ventilation.

FAST FACTS ABOUT BRAZILIAN KERATIN SERVICES

WHAT IT IS: A chemical process service to smooth curly, frizzy hair. Includes the application and absorption of a liquid solution throughout the hair. Heat (450 degree flatironing) is applied to activate, and seal keratin to the hair.

WHAT YOU CAN CHARGE: The service can command up to \$800; the average price ranges from \$300 to \$600, depending on length and density of hair.

TIME IT TAKES: Most technicians complete the service within 90 minutes. Some salons have stylists "double up" to expedite the flatironing stage, depending on the length and texture.

PERMANENT OR TEMPORARY: Designed to be long-lasting without changing the physical structure of the hair. Fades over time with shampooing.

HOW LONG IT LASTS: The straightening, frizz-reducing effects are

estimated to last up to four months, depending on the client's hair texture, condition and home maintenance routine.

DO: Perform color services before processing keratin treatments.

DON'T: Shampoo hair for three or four days after processing

KNOW THAT: Formalin, a cosmetic-grade solution of formaldehyde, is what binds and preserves the keratin (a protective protein) on the cuticle, and is what creates the long-lasting effect.

ALWAYS: Ask your distributor or manufacturer for an MSDS on the product. Be suspicious of any product that does not plainly list its ingredients on the label.

INSIST: On training, education and proper ventilation systems.

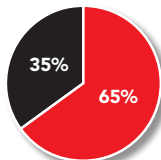
› **SNAPSHOT**

SURVEY SAYS ...

AS PART OF OUR REPORT on keratin services, SALON TODAY conducted a brief online survey of a sample of salon owners from our ProView Panel. Fifty-two owners participated. Here are the results:

WHAT HAVE THEY HEARD?

Nearly two-thirds (**65%**) are familiar with the term keratin treatment or Brazilian keratin service. The other **35%** were not.



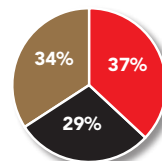
HOW/WHERE DID THEY HEAR ABOUT BRAZILIAN KERATIN SERVICES?

(Choose all that apply)

- Trade magazine: **53%**
- From a sales person: **29%**
- At an industry show/event: **26%**
- From another salon professional: **26%**
- From a client: **18%**
- From consumer press: **18%**

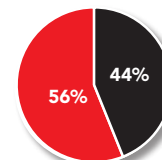
HOW MANY ARE OFFERING IT, AND WHO IS CONSIDERING ADDING IT?

- More than one-third (**37%**) are currently performing keratin treatments in their salons.
- Another **29%** say have done or plan to do research to explore the possibility of adding Brazilian keratin services to their salon menus.
- Another third (**34%**) say no, they are not offering it, and not currently exploring the idea of adding it.



ARE THEY AWARE OF ANY CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE SERVICE?

44% said yes, they knew there was some controversy regarding Brazilian keratin services. **56%** (including 35% who had not heard of the service) were unaware of any challenges.



system—fans don't help a stylist three stations away. Use gloves and masks.

Peter Garzone, owner and president of ProSalon distributorship in Cranston, Rhode Island, says an article in *Allure* initially made him happy he avoided keratin treatments. Now, he wishes he'd started distributing the formalin-based product he chose sooner.

"If you're concerned, wear a passive air monitoring badge that measures formaldehyde in the air," says Garzone. "Ours tested at 0.25 parts per million."

According to OSHA spokesperson Ted Fitzgerald, the maximum, permissible formaldehyde concentration in an atmosphere to which workers are exposed is 0.75 parts per million (ppm) over an eight-hour period—or 2 ppm for 15 minutes.

› **Usage Issues**

As a matter of practice, all salons should have well-ventilated storage rooms and avoid placing cross-reactive chemicals near one another. Formalin can be explosive in the presence of hydrogen peroxide. Sodium chloride, salt and ammonia are all incompatible with formalin, which is why coloring the hair

Be your own advocate, research and test brands, buy from reputable companies only.

before formalin-based keratin treatments is recommended.

"When you discuss the service with clients, talk about hair condition, lifestyle, expectations," says **Denise Kingsley**, a texture specialist who owns **High Tech Hair** in Denver.

Because formalin-based keratin treatments do not break bonds, users say their true power is in transforming damaged, frizzy or wavy hair. Kingsley adds that it's not the best choice for healthy, super-curly African-American hair, but if that hair type has been previously relaxed or heavily colored—the more porous it is—the better the service will work and the longer it'll last. Another must-know: You can't use a shampoo that contains sodium chloride, which breaks down formalin-based chemical links and possibly others, reversing results.

› **The Choice is Yours**

Hundreds if not thousands of high-end salons are offering keratin treatments because clients are clamoring for it. Many say the results it produces—a semi-permanent way to smooth wave and banish frizz—has become an irreplaceable business builder.

Those who aren't ready to bring in the category, or refuse to do so, say they are sticking with alternate service options to cater to their clientele: from flatironing and blow outs to traditional relaxing and Japanese thermal straightening. The latter two break bonds and use chemicals that require their own precautions. Some manufacturers and salons are capitalizing on the questions surrounding formalin-based keratin products to promote these alternatives.

The best advice from all industry and category experts is for salon owners to do their own homework. Make an informed business decision for your salon, your team, your clients. Evaluate and assess your ventilation system and safety procedures for all areas and services offered in the salon. Do what you need to do to protect the health of your business. **ST**