

advancements



in the treatment of aging skin

| by Margaret Ancira

UNDERSTANDING AGING SKIN

Remember the days when most skin care product ads on TV and in magazines featured an acne-riddled teen in search of clear skin? Times are changing. The ever-expanding baby boomer population has redirected the skin care industry's focus towards anti-aging solutions. The boomers' desire to look younger for personal or professional reasons and the means to pay for it has generated unprecedented research and development efforts for anti-aging technology. Today, more new product launches target the needs of aging skin than any other skin condition.

As a result of this surge, our country is filled with consumers overwhelmed by anti-aging products and treatment options. According to a survey by the American Academy of Dermatology, nine out of ten women are confused by the choices in over-the-counter skin care products and professional treatments. In another study by the National Consumers League, the vast majority of more than 1,300 men and women polled question the accuracy of ads for over-the-counter and prescription anti-aging products. Only half of those using over-the-counter anti-aging products were satisfied with the results, while another 15 percent said they experienced negative side effects including redness, irritation or an allergic reaction. The

one promising note to emerge from this study is that consumers considered their physicians to be the most trusted source of information regarding anti-aging options.

This is our golden opportunity as skin care professionals to help clear up the confusion. By helping patients understand the aging process better, we can also assist them in making wiser choices in their quest to recapture a more youthful appearance.

NATURE VS. NUTURE

The number one driving force behind the aging process is genetics. All cells have growth factor receptors on their surface into which a specific factor fits. It is similar to a lock and a key. When the growth factor binds to the growth factor receptor, it stimulates cell division. Growth factors play an enormous role in the health and function of our bodies. Epidermal growth factors (EGF) work specifically to stimulate tissue growth and epithelial cell proliferation.

As skin ages, the communication between the various layers of skin is hindered because of a critical decrease in the number of growth factors receptors. The skin relies on EGF as the single most important substance for the development and maintenance of both the epidermis and the dermis. Each person's biological timetable for this gradual breakdown of our skin cells is based on his or her DNA, and is out of our control.

The speed at which these cells age and deteriorate is brought on by the environmental exposure and lifestyle habits. UV exposure from the sun or from tanning beds is without a doubt the biggest culprit in premature aging. Numerous studies have repeatedly demonstrated that

of DNA, causing cellular stress and a breakdown of collagen and elastin, and greatly increase the risk of skin cancer. The

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effects are so damaging that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has added ultraviolet (UV) radiation to its latest list of 228 identified cancer-causing substances. The list, which is updated annually by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), cites "broad spectrum ultraviolet radiation produced by the sun and artificial light sources" as a known carcinogen.

Wind, pollution, extreme temperatures along with smoking,

poor diet, lack of exercise and a lax skin care regimen also contribute to how quickly our skin begins to show its age. The effects are impossible to hide. As our largest organ, the skin is the fortress that protects us from the world outside. But even fortresses lose their ability to protect if not properly maintained. The good news is that unlike genetic aging, environmental aging IS a force that can be controlled and offset through a consistent and active skin care regimen.

TOPICAL SOLUTIONS

According to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS), nearly 8.3 Americans underwent surgical and non-surgical cosmetic procedures in 2003. Only 22 percent of those procedures were surgical, with non-surgical



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procedures accounting for 78 percent of the total.