

Articles

THE MOTIVATION FOR THE BIRTH OF ENVIRON®

My concern for skin cancer in the early 1980s was the reason why I started the research that eventually led to the conception of the Environ® Original range of skin care products. I knew from my experience and from statistics, that skin cancer was on the increase and it seemed a logical idea to attribute this to the then newly discovered "ozone hole". I also knew that attempts to stop the damage to the ozone layer would not start to take effect until well into the 21st Century. Therefore, we had to do something to protect our skins.

It was my misfortune between 1979 and 1980 to attempt to treat the melanoma of two charismatic young patients who both died before they were 23 years old. Such a horrifying experience leaves an indelible scar on one's life as a doctor. We want our young patients to become healthy adults and to live full lives. Those two people did not get this opportunity because of a disease initiated by the sun. I understood then that I would diagnose more and more young people like them with a disease that would shorten their lives. For that reason, I started studying the mechanism of skin cancer.

Because of the positive effects that I had noticed on my patients whom I had treated for acne, I started using vitamin A acid (retinoic) on my own facial skin in 1982, just before my 40th birthday. By 1986, I had uncovered all the positive facts about vitamin A and the antioxidants and I started to promote the use of Tretinoin for the prevention of skin cancer. Eventually in 1987, I wrote a letter to the South African Medical Journal to urge doctors to protect their patients by using Tretinoin. That letter was not published for more than a year but, after a heated debate between myself and the Department of Dermatology at the University of Cape Town, it was eventually published in July 1989.

At that time, people laughed when I spoke about free radicals as they were then not the household word that they have now become. Meanwhile, I had approached two South African cosmetic companies and advised them to make creams using vitamin A and free radical scavengers. They were not interested so, initially, I used to prepare vitamin A creams myself

in my kitchen! I hunted for a chemist and we then created the creams which I offered to my patients (from 1988 onwards). The creams became so popular that people made appointments to see me just to obtain them. And it was then that I decided to start a company to sell the creams. I truly believed that these creams would keep people's skins healthy, in fact, I believed that these creams were essential to keep their skins healthy. My concern for people's health has always been the guiding reason for the development of these Original creams. I also insisted that the cost of the creams had to be affordable to everyone in my country. My insistence has meant that the creams are now offered in South Africa at a specially low price so that young people can use them to minimise photo-damage.

I believe that everyone on earth should use vitamin A topically to keep their skin safe and, eventually, every skin care range in the world should include vitamin A and antioxidants. I have no doubt about that. Nor do I doubt that Environ® products will remain a leader in the world's skin care products. Fortunately, my sister Val makes sure that our company grows from strength to strength.

I made Environ® creams because no other similar cream existed in any part of the world, even, as I found out later, in America or Europe. Environ® was the natural evolution from intensive reading into the physiology of the skin and current ideas about skin pathology. It is simply based on concrete science. Of course, we will continue to learn a great deal more about how to protect and restore our skin's health and beauty. I hope that both Val and I will continue to be part of this exciting field for many years.

I look forward to influencing an ever-enlarging circle of people who will benefit from the burgeoning science that will progressively be incorporated into the Environ® skin care system. I also hope that I will be here to see young Environ® users grow up into mature, remarkably young-looking and healthy adults.

Remember always to protect your skin!

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