



ZEIN OBAGI

ZO SKIN HEALTH

Rosalind Hill talks to Dr Zein Obagi about how the signs of ageing can be prevented through a healthy approach to skin care, as well as his own thoughts on the aesthetic industry as a whole.

THE ZO SKIN HEALTH range is perhaps one of the most recognisable skincare portfolios—both medical and non-medical—headed by one of the industry's leading dermatologists. And as a physician who has been in the business for 30 years, Dr Obagi has the wealth of experience necessary to continually develop a must-have range of products to supplement the dermatologist or plastic surgeon's arsenal.

'Developing my own skincare line was never an objective of mine when growing up,' Dr Obagi explains. 'However, I started to address the skin from a different perspective—cellular function—and

found that by slightly changing the formulations already available to us, we could penetrate through the skin to reach and improve the function of the cells, and the overall health of the skin as a result.'

And it is this philosophy that is core to Dr Obagi's practice; looking beyond the outer layers of the skin and thinking about the roles of the melanocytes, keratinocytes, fibroblasts and collagen, for example.

Skin health science

Zein Obagi moved to the US from Syria in 1972, where he undertook a post-graduate internship and pathology residency, before undertaking dermatologist training with the US Navy in San Diego. After 6

years working with the Navy, he went into private practice and started to develop the concept of 'skin health science' from 1981.

'I did a lot of extensive research when I was a pathologist on the skin and skin disorders, skin cancers, and how to improve them and improve the quality of life for those with burns and scars, for example,' says Dr Obagi.

'That research led to the discovery that many of the problems we suffer in our skin are actually the result of a cellular function abnormality, and that by addressing those cells directly, those skin problems can be improved.'

Dr Obagi's interest in the health of the skin stemmed from witnessing the plight of burn victims while in the Navy, as well



as that of his own sister, who had been badly burned and scarred as a teenager.

'When I saw my sister going through this I really felt that something should be done, and this started my interest in dermatology and pathology in the hope that someday I would be able to do something positive about this.'

Supporting healthy skin

This hope for positivity is clearly apparent in the skincare line that ZO Health offers. After 25 years, the products are continuing evolving as science, too, evolves. For example, where hydroquinone might previously have been used, it is now known that 80% of patients can develop a resistance if used for more than a few months.

'So we corrected the mistakes and added novel ideas to the protocol to enable doctors to treat patients in a more effective way,' says Dr Obagi.

He further explains that its not enough to focus on the disease, and reiterates the importance of cellular function and damage to it (owing to hormonal changes, sun exposure, ageing, etc.), for the upkeep of healthy skin.

'By definition, healthy skin should be smooth, firm and tight, even in colour, hydrated and strong,' explains Dr Obagi. 'So it is paramount to treat the whole skin—restore the health of the whole skin—while treating the disease at the same time. By doing that you are allowing the skin to treat itself and repair itself. The skin alters with age, for example, because many of those qualities are

not functioning properly as a result of dead cells.'

And this is essentially the ZO philosophy for healthy skin; the shift from simply focusing on the surface of the skin, to providing the tools needed to rebuild cellular function. The effects of ageing can certainly be prevented if one begins to support the fibroblasts, collagen and elastin at and early age.

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'It is a novel world in which we are dealing with the maintenance of healthy skin,' says Dr Obagi. 'A lot of the products on the market do not focus on the broad spectrum needed for healthy skin.

'Many cosmetic products will simply focus on moisturisation and have dubious anti-ageing benefits, while medical products will aim on the treatment of disease. My aim with ZO skin health, therefore, is to give the skin the tools it needs to renew itself while offering a high standard of skincare.'

Developing best practice

Dr Obagi is a very busy man. Between treating patients and continually researching and developing new product lines, he also has the time to run courses and lectures for his peers. His own event, The Ultimate Skin Health Symposium will take place in Beverly Hills this November, featuring lectures and workshops, as well as live

demonstrations. There is certainly a lot of interest in the ZO concepts of treatment for the improvement of skin quality, and Dr Obagi is keen to pass on his own pearls of wisdom.

'I really think that good skin care is an integral part of aesthetic medicine because if you inject a botulinum toxin or dermal filler on skin that is sensitive or damaged, the result will not be optimal,' he says.

'My feeling is that you should start with the foundations, and that is what I am reinforcing to physicians—no matter what procedure you carry out, it is paramount to improve the skin first and then add the icing on the cake.'

And these are rules that Dr Obagi believes should be adopted by all physicians in aesthetic medicine, which can only be enhanced as a result.

'My advice is that a dermatologist or plastic surgeon should really look at the skin, thinking about both disease and the overall quality, as well as what might be necessary to strengthen the skin without rushing into any procedures.

'To improve the skin and obtain the best results for the patient, we should focus on the health of the skin ahead of monetary gain.'

The Ultimate Skin Health Symposium takes place in Beverly Hills, 9-11 November 2012. For further information turn to page 49, or visit www.ultimateskinsymposium.com, www.zoskinhealth.com, or www.obagiskin.com

