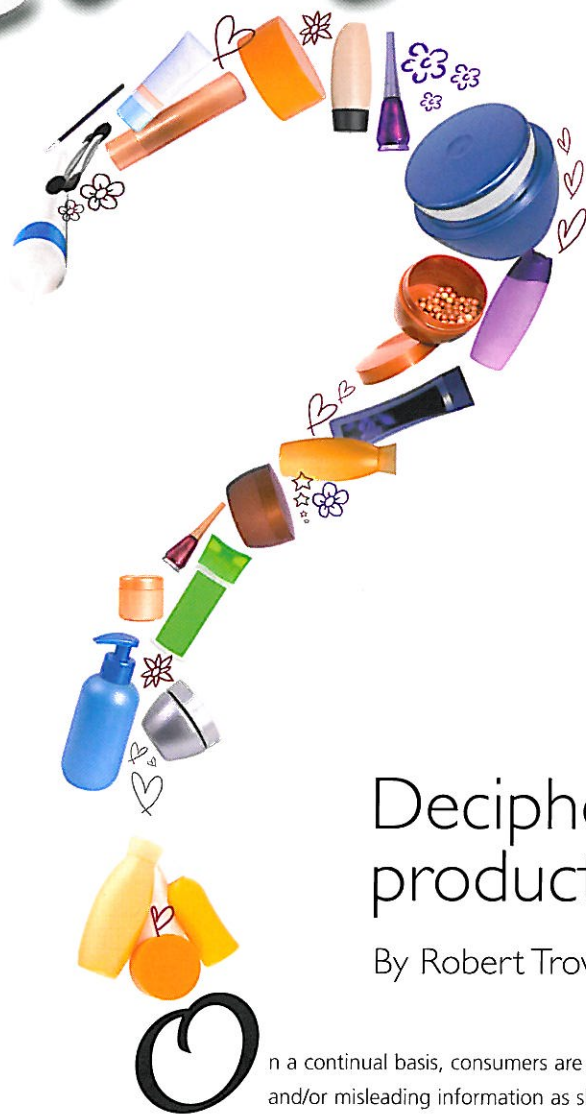


Derma Lingua



Deciphering skin care product language

By Robert Trow

On a continual basis, consumers are bombarded with false, confusing and/or misleading information as skin care product manufacturers try to drive the market with hype and a myriad of false or exaggerated claims coupled with celebrity endorsements. Arming yourself with a little knowledge will help you wade through this landscape.

Since so much attention has been paid to so-called organic and natural skin care products, let's start there. The news may surprise you.

That's because organic or natural skin care products can be anything



a manufacturer claims. There are no official or regulatory standards governing the use of these terms when it comes to topical skin care. The terms only have marketing value and truly indicate little—if anything.

Natural does not mean a product is better. Research tells us that some of the most effective skin care ingredients are not and cannot be natural in the pure sense. While many may have their origins in nature, they need to be synthesized in a lab and made bio-available to be effective. They are natural products in origin, but not strictly natural in the end product.

Many ingredients found in nature are highly toxic. A critical point to remember: The issue of toxicity is based more on the concentration of an ingredient rather than the ingredient itself. It is more important to understand the amount of an ingredient in a product rather than the ingredient itself. Do not be influenced by uniform beliefs.

As of the writing of this article, there has never been a certified clinical test to demonstrate the effectiveness of any organic or natural skin care cosmeceutical to support claims of anti-aging or photo-damaged skin care benefits. However, there are many skin care products that have empirical research behind them that support their efficacy, but they contain ingredients that have to be processed to become effective.

Another term that is bandied about that can cause consumer misinformation is "FDA approved," specifically when applied to cosmetic and cosmeceutical products. Cosmetics and cosmeceuticals do have to be registered and compliant with certain regulatory issues, but they do not go through an FDA approval process.

That leads us to the term cosmeceutical itself. It, too, can be confusing. Cosmeceuticals fit into a place between a prescription product and a cosmetic. It is commonly used to describe products that are cosmetics but have demonstrably effective results. In many cases, they are at the cutting-edge of skin care, but they are not required to go through the documentation, testing and clinical trials that a prescription product must adhere to.

There are more than 500 skin care manufacturers in the United States alone. Worldwide, the number is many times greater. As renowned dermatologist Dr. Carl Thornfeldt—CEO and science officer of Episciences, Inc.—points out in his new book, "The New Ideal Skin Health," clinical evidence has shown that only a small percentage of thousands of ingredients touted as effective in skin care products have demonstrable and visible benefits. As each manufacturer bombards us with claims, statements, results, testimonials and even before-and-after pictures, we should heed the old adage, "Buyer beware."

However, there is one constant you can count on: The most effective ingredient in skin care that fights against the signs of extrinsic aging is Vitamin A, which I recently wrote about in *Vive*.

It is the real deal. And that's not hype! **V**

Robert Trow is an authority in the business of skin care and has been in the skin care field for more than 10 years. He speaks frequently on current and emerging topics at national and international meetings and to medical spas, aestheticians and physicians. He and his wife, Carol, own DermaConcepts USA and are the eastern US (excluding metro NYC) distributors for Environ Skin Care.

