



'Aesthetic treatments are an investment. To maintain the benefits of these treatments, it is important for patients to be on a strong maintenance programme.'

New York-based dermatologist David Colbert (above)



OPENING UP NEW FRONTIERS

Beauty powerhouses such as L'Oreal have dedicated whole divisions to cosmeceuticals; (left) the medi-spa in L'Oreal's Professional Derma Center at Westgate mall; (above) Vichy Dercos Neogenic hair-loss treatment; (below) product range from Prive Clinic's Skinworks.

PHOTOS: L'OREAL, PRIVE CLINIC, COLBERT MD

cal director of Prive Clinic at Palais Renaissance, Karen Soh, also launched a skincare range, Prive Skinworks.

"People see results with aesthetics treatments and want similar results with their skincare products," says Dr Soh, whose products contain ingredients such as sodium hyaluronate which can hold up to a thousand times its weight in water to penetrate into and hydrate skin. "They see skincare as a complement to their treatment or as home-care maintenance."

Even beauty powerhouses such as L'Oreal have dedicated whole divisions to cosmeceuticals. Termed "derma skincare", such products from L'Oreal-owned brands such as SkinCeuticals, Vichy and Laroche-Posay have been developed with the medical community and recommended by dermatologists and healthcare professionals. The skincare ranges are so popular that a standalone boutique, Professional Derma Center, was unveiled in Westgate Mall late last year to meet the growing demand from savvy shoppers. Specifically, the Asian market has been growing at double digits for the past five years, with Singapore considered as a mature Asia market for the category, says

Annie Law, general manager of Active Cosmetics Division, L'Oreal Singapore.

"We have two main types of customers: The first consists of consumers who have specific needs - they usually have acne-prone, sensitive or intolerant skin types and are looking for products formulated with no paraben, alcohol or fragrance, which are safe to use and will not irritate skin or aggravate skin sensitivity," explains Ms Law.

"We also have a growing group that are seeking for high quality and value products; they usually wish to trade up from mass-market products."

Priced from \$18 to \$335, these products may cost slightly more than those from the group's other drug-store brands such as L'Oreal Paris. But they also provide unique benefits: For example, the award-winning SkinCeuticals antioxidant ingredient C E Ferulic is clinically proven to reduce post-laser down-time - a relief for those who dread the raw-skinned effect following the popular aesthetic treatment.

And as much as doctors are banking on cosmetics lines to widen their reach beyond the clinic, the Professional Derma Center aims to provide personalised services within the store - apart from simply dispensing beauty products. Trained consultants are armed with high-tech diagnostic tools to provide skin and hair advice, while an in-store medi-spa offers SkinCeuticals facials. Previously, the treatments were only available at luxury outlets such as The Spa Artisan at The Fullerton Hotel.

But while multi-syllabic ingredients and clinical-sounding brand names may suggest credibility and results, Dr Colbert warns, "cosmeceuticals are subject to the same image and marketing-based sales techniques that are found in cosmetics as a whole. In fact, there are many brands that leverage a physician's name without having a strong clinical story. It is important for consumers to take the time to understand the basics of dermatology so that they can independently evaluate the claims that are being made by marketers."

For example, in 2012, beauty giant L'Oréal was ordered to tone down an ad for its anti-ageing Genifique range by the US Food and Drug Administration. Claims that it "boosts the activity of genes" and will "stimulate cell regeneration to reconstruct skin to a denser quality" could only be made by a product classified as a drug, according to the US body. Not that the L'Oreal-owned brand was much affected by the slap on the hand, launching a new advanced formulation of the super-serum with 40 per cent more actives than its predecessor last year.

As Dr Soh elaborates: "It's always important to read the ingredients of the product before you make the purchase. There are certain products that are controlled drugs and can only be sold with a prescription from the doctor and available at authorised clinics."

Ultimately, cosmeceuticals are targeted at "consumers who are now better informed and more demanding", says Ms Law. In other words, we expect a little more than sheer hope when we purchase a jar of the latest skin-saving salve.

The science of saving face

Specialty unguents backed by celebrity doctors and cutting edge science seem to hold more clout in the competitive realm of skincare than a superstar ambassador or established brand name. **By May Yip**

'DERMA skincare", "bioactive compounds" and "medi-aesthetics" - the *de rigueur* buzzwords for the beauty business appear to be geared towards geeks with biomedical degrees rather than your average Jane, keen to banish a wrinkle or two. These days, rather than ads covered with the air-brushed visages of starlets, celebrity doctor endorsements, futuristic ingredients and products with names that sound more clinical than cosmetic reign when it comes to peddling jars of hope.

With lunch-time Botox injections and weekly laser treatments becoming beauty regimen fixtures, the growth in aesthetic treatments have in part led to a resurgence in cosmeceuticals - a loosely-defined skincare category that is projected to ring up sales of US\$12 billion in 2015 in the US alone, according to a report by Research and Markets. And a recent study conducted by the International Society of Aesthetics Plastic Surgery revealed that Asia boasts the highest concentration of plastic surgeons by continent as well as the highest concentration of plastic surgery procedures carried out as compared to the rest of the continents. Non-invasive procedures also account for a large percentage of treatments carried out.

"Aesthetic treatments are an investment. To maintain the benefits of these treatments, it is important for patients to be on a strong maintenance programme," says David Colbert, a New York-based dermatologist whose

clientele includes stars such as Naomi Watts and Rachel Weisz. "My brand was created as a form of aftercare for my celebrity clientele. It was designed as the perfect complement to the Triad Red Carpet facial laser treatment but has been so successful that it has evolved to become a substitute for people who are uncomfortable with aesthetic procedures or who can't afford them."

While on one end of the cosmetics spectrum are organic beauty marques, touting the use of all-natural ingredients and traditional remedies, high-tech potions are nevertheless leading the pack in the survival of the prettiest. Coined in 1980 by dermatologist Albert Kligman, "cosmeceuticals are designed to have clinical benefits and are typically built around active ingredients that are supported by scientific evidence", explains Dr Colbert. His cult, eponymous skincare label is available at upscale department stores and multi-label boutiques such as Barneys, Colette and Space.NK, as well as IYAC Aesthetics and Anti-Aging Clinic here at Camden Medical Centre.

And he is not the only doctor to have lent his name and expertise to skincare ranges: Think successful cosmetics marques such as Dr Brandt or Perricone MD, or even a capsule range of products by Harvard-trained medical doctor and botanist Andrew Weil for plant-based skincare brand Origins. Closer to home, Georgia Lee who has been providing aesthetic medical services in her Holland Village clinic, boasts her own Dr-GL range of custom skincare for Asian skin, while medi-



BIG BUSINESS

Cosmeceuticals is projected to ring up sales of US\$12 billion in 2015 in the US alone, according to a report by Research and Markets; (above) Colbert MD products; (below) SkinCeuticals products



'It's always important to read the ingredients of the product before you make the purchase. There are certain products that are controlled drugs and can only be sold with a prescription from the doctor and available at authorised clinics.'

Prive Clinic medical director Karen Soh (left)