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Speaker: Dr. Ben Johnson

Episode 25: The Top 10 Biggest Mistakes You Must Avoid in Your Anti-Aging Routine_Part 2

Hello and welcome back to another podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Ben Johnson. So excited to be finishing up on a list that is a must know list for all of you who are looking to stay beautiful and continue to help your skin thrive from the inside and out. It really involves not making some poor decisions.

In the first part of this two-part series, we were discussing things that you absolutely should not do. And we were picking sometimes things that seemed somewhat benign, right? Not too bad. How could a scrub be so bad? But part of the reason it makes the list is because it's so common and it's so commonly misunderstood. We're going to jump right in with the top five. Now we're up to number five on the list.

Just to recap, last week, we talked about:

10. Steroids.

9. Scrubs and exfoliating activities.

8. Retinols: plain retinols like retinol, cis-retinal, trans-retinal, retinyl palmitate, retinyl acetate, and retinoic acid, all being bad.

7. Alpha hydroxy acids and Jessner peels, this concept of burning the skin once a month as somehow being rejuvenating.

6. Aggressive peels such as TCA and phenol and why that can get increasingly dangerous.

As we get to this number five list, again, I am highlighting the things that I've learned having owned eight clinics in my early days as a physician, having formulated now two skincare companies and knowing all the ingredients and strategies that are going on there, and just spending so much time with many of you getting to understand how the skin works, what we need to do to get it right.

I can tell you, we are knocking it out of the park with our results right now. I'm so excited that you're following along because I know you're going to be loving the results as well. But in order to get great results, you have to avoid the big nasties. The big nasties are in this top five list.

Number 5, IPLs. I know IPL very well. I had 15 IPL machines and sometimes people will call them lasers. It's not quite accurate because laser is actually defining a specific wavelength, and IPLs put out a range of wavelengths, but these wavelengths are meant to kind of catch

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all depths of redness or all depths of pigmentation, because you're going to cook everything you're doing it with intense pulse light and with laser for that matter has to do with finding the right chromophores.

What you're targeting is wavelengths that are drawn to specific colors and there are different peaks. 690 is the brown peak. About 530 is the red peak. Like these, you want to find wavelengths in those peak ranges. What that does is the heat is drawn to that color, that color vibrates at a very rapid pace because it's being targeted by this intense wattage of light. The net result is that it cooks, so you end up cooking pigments. The reason why IPL is in the top five is because it is so common. It is one of the most common procedures.

I used IPL primarily in my practice for laser hair removal and it is a commonly used form of laser hair removal. I would say to you that it's a pretty good one for that purpose. I was just talking to someone recently about hair removal and I haven't seen hair removal create a significant amount of aging. So, I'm not really too anti-hair removal when it comes to situations like we were talking about on the face, electrolysis has a higher risk of scarring. If we're talking about underarms and bikini lines, the success of hair removal is really high. It's amazing how well the hair stays away. Even on the legs, you can get really long-term good results; on the face, less so. On the torso, for men doing their chest, it gets real patchy and it's a process. Even doing it on the face. It can be very patchy and look very bizarre if someone's got facial hair coming in and just little patches and here and there. Also forearms; forearms are challenging. But anyway, I don't want to digress too much. I got to get through this list, but I just wanted to say IPL for hair removal, I'm not really including in this. I'm talking about IPL facials.

The reason why I don't like IPL facials is because they do target red and they do target brown. While the brown can be fine, I mean, in other words, if I had a collection of brown pigment in my epidermis, which is where it collects almost exclusively; so if I have this collection of brown on my epidermis and I cook it with an IPL, it's going to sort of rip it away from its structural, where it's being held within the epidermis, and allow it to sort of peel up and out of the skin. Then you get this nice, even skin tone, post IPL. I get why that is appealing to people.

Then when it comes to redness, you might have all these little capillaries or bits of redness here or there, and you do a pass with the IPL and some of those capillaries might disappear right then and there. Some of the redness over time with repeated applications might disappear a little bit. Then you're like, "Hey, I don't understand what's bad here. Redness is bad. Redness means I have a wound. And clearly this IPL must be helping my wound." Well, therein lies the misunderstanding.

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What an IPL does, is it collapses microvasculature. Your skin, as you've probably heard me say, (which I hope you have, because this is one of the big reasons why your skin ages), your skin ages because it loses circulation. Your skin declines in its performance, its collagen manufacturing, its epidermal turnover rate, its wound repair capacity, and in its general ability to nourish itself and keep itself going at a high rate. All of that declines because your circulation declines. That's about 1% a year starting, let's say at 25. So, I often point out that at 50 years old, you have 25% less circulation going through your skin.

So, if I go in for regular visits to shut down my blood vessels, I'm aging my skin. I think it's a bad practice. I don't think it's something that people should be doing regularly. I think if you do one IPL don't fret about it. I'm not here to shame people or make them feel guilty.

It's also about where do you invest your anti-aging dollars? The funny thing about IPL is I remember when it shifted from hair removal to rejuvenation, first came out with all the claims in the world, "Oh, stimulates collagen. It thickens the dermis, etc." And boy, those disappeared fast. They disappeared very fast and they no longer made any claims about collagen. I don't think it would make more collagen because of the blood vessel issue. But it's possible that if you cook to the epidermis enough and it shed, you might trigger some increased collagen activity by measurement.

But again, it's a confusing measurement because what you're measuring is that first 48-72 hours after you've burned the bejesus out of your skin. Yes, you're going to see increased collagen production. This is why the studies are so confusing. This is why they can sit in front of a room of 100 dermatologists and throw the slides up and they all nod their head like, "Mm, more collagen. Good."

In reality, it's about net collagen. It's about where are you stealing the collagen from to increase the collagen into the epidermis and why the heck would I want more epidermal collagen when is that stuff going to shed off?

That's why I don't like IPL. I don't like how often they do it. I don't like they sell it like it's a rejuvenation process. I get the even skin tone part. I get it. There are better ways to do that. Stop collapsing your blood vessels. That is what IPL does.

Now. Last thing I'll say on that is yes, your skin does replace a lot of them. For example, when you start shutting things down, your skin is going to do its best to recover. However, it's never back to 100%.

Let's say with each pass of IPL, you collapse 1,000 micro blood vessels. 900 of those are going to come back over the next month; maybe even over the next few weeks. I mean,

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neovascularization or the process of new blood vessel formation is amazing. I am in awe of the network and reopening up the pathways and the instant sort of response to trauma.

We talked last week about TCA peel causing wounds that cause telangiectasias, and you have those showing up within days of burning your skin. That's amazing to me that the skin's like, this is a wound we're going to need extra help with. Let's put that extra blood vessel supply right there. I find that all phenomenal. So yeah, you don't want to shut it down. It's not going to all come back. Let's make the better choices.

Number 4, Retinoic acid. I've said it before, I'm going to say it again. I'm going to say it until I'm blue in the face because I'm teaching or talking on a podcast and you can't tell how blue I am, but I'm telling you that retinoic acid is one of the most misunderstood substances on the planet because it is by far the most potent. Not by far, actually, because retinaldehyde is right there. But it is definitely the top collagen stimulator in your skin.

So retinoic acid is the most powerful collagen-stimulating molecule with retinaldehyde we'll say a close second. In the research, they had equal levels of collagen stimulation. I can explain that in that it simply comes down to the fact that if I put enough retinaldehyde in your skin, your skin will convert as many retinoic acid transactions as it can.

In other words, you only have so many fibroblasts making collagen in your dermis. They only have so many receptors on them, so the skin is never going to make more retinoic acid than it has receptors. It's too smart for that. If I put retinoic acid in, in a big bolus in an overdose, then I will probably max out all my retinoic acid receptors.

If I put a huge bolus of retinaldehyde into my skin, then I'll probably convert as many as I possibly can into retinoic acid for the same reason, because the presence of retinaldehyde free floating appears, according to the research, to trigger the conversion to retinoic acid.

Remember the steps to make retinoic acid, it's only one step with retinaldehyde. That is why retinaldehyde is so amazing because it's the tool the skin uses to make Retin-A.

And you say, "But why isn't it just Retin-A all the time?" The skin doesn't store Retin-A. That's why Retin-A is bad, it's not stored. When you give too much Retin-A to your skin, your skin doesn't know what to do with it. It's literally floating around in places it shouldn't be. So now you're over here in new wound section and in the new wound section, the first thing your skin wants to do is tear down the damaged collagen. But in the presence of Retin-A, the message is confusing because Retin-A says, "Don't tear down, build up." But

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that means your skin won't tear down that molecule, the damaged molecule that needs to go.

It's like you're going into a crumbling building and they say, "We'll put up new foundation beams over there, but leave the crumbling foundation beams over here." What's going to happen to that building? Part of it is going to collapse.

That's what's happening in your skin. That's why Retin-A increases thinning of the dermis by 18% after one year's use and up to 30% after five years' use. Five years of Retin-A, 30% thinning of your papillary dermis. That is one of the key aspects of the wrinkle formation right there.

It gets confusing because Retin-A will have so badly damaged your epidermis. It actually stops your keratinocytes from becoming corneocytes on the surface; like it actually arrests the natural formation of a healthy barrier.

It causes all kinds of free radical damage. It causes DNA damage. It exfoliates your barrier, so it increases your sun sensitivity and dehydrates you, but hey it's okay, because if you keep applying it to your skin, the doctor kindly reminds you that the redness gets less and less over time. Why is that? Because you've beaten your skin into submission. Your skin is adapting to the new toxic environment. It's not thriving. It's adapting.

So retinoic acid is bad, it's not for any part of your daily routine. Let your body make it. Feed your skin retinaldehyde because if I give too much retinaldehyde to your skin, it will store what it doesn't use. If I give too much Retin-A to your skin, it will just keep causing harm. Of course, Retin-A in the form of isotretinoin, in the form of Accutane, poisoned almost every organ, right?

So again, Retin-A is not a molecule to take lightly. You let your body be in control of the manufacturing of it. You encourage as much as you can. The only safe way to do that is retinaldehyde.

Number 3, Filler. Hyaluroindase primarily. There's probably some new substances come up. I don't keep up to speed on all the new fillers because they're all kind of the same. Some of them tell marketing stories of how they caused collagen formation or create a network to form collagen. That's a BS marketing story. There is no net gain to filler.

The only positive thing you could say to filler, which is also a huge negative, is in a lot of cases, it doesn't even go away. It's there 10 years later. There's a plastic surgeon out of

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Australia that did MRIs on people's faces and they found little balls of filler scar tissue floating around, free floating in their face.

Now I'll share with you my story. I just became aware of fat pad atrophy literally a year and a half ago. Now I have the total solution for it. Our [Recovery](#) is unbelievable. The before and afters are going to start coming out and you are just going to be just amazed if you're not already seeing it in your face right now, because you're currently using it.

[Recovery](#) replaces your fat pads in your face that are lost, that atrophy over time. It's so incredible. But people are using filler as the alternative. So before I realized I could make a product that fixes fat pads, before I even realized that fat pads were part of what I was seeing on my face that I didn't like, and I was like, "What's happening with my skin?" Because I knew my collagen layers were good; my wrinkles were still there and I still have some wrinkles, I'm not saying I've completely eradicated wrinkles at age 53. But what I'm saying is, I can make a huge reversal of what had been lost through fat pad and through collagen rebuilding through the osmosis strategy. But what filler has done is it's ruined America; and I really believe this.

I'm looking around and I mean, every face I know... I will look at a newscaster and watch the progression. Like you should look at the before and afters of some of your favorite newscasters and you'll see the progression where they have this lovely structure, defined cheekbones and facial... I don't even know. They're like the undulations of the natural beauty of each person's individualized face. They're there for a reason. They're so appreciated.

When we talk about what people find beautiful, that is one of the most beautiful aspects of the face is each person's unique bone structure and how the cheekbones roll into the cheeks and how the nose shapes roll up into that cheekbone and the jaw line and all of that.

What happens with the filler is it just becomes one big uniform blob; one big blob of blah. Smooth. Everyone gets all excited. "Oh, I added an inch to my face, so now I have to like make sure to extend my arms as I'm pushing open a door, because I don't want my cheeks to hit the door before my hands do." It's bad, people. I'm telling you, it's bad. You know, like people have lost their minds.

The same thing happened with breast augmentation. When breast augmentation started to become big, especially in the celebrity community, all these young girls were like, "I want to look like her." And "her" was unfortunately a woman with a body fat of 10% who had a couple of sacks stuck on her chest cavity and it completely looks fake. And yes, I'm sorry, if you still are attached to this look, I just personally prefer a more natural look. But the plastic surgeons would tell you, everyone came in saying, "I want that bag on the chest look."

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Well, that's what's happening with filler. Everybody is filling their face up because they're like, God help us if we have a wrinkle, but who needs, I don't know, real beauty anymore? Like I'm telling you, people don't look the same and it's lumpy in reality. There's a ton of photo editing happening that people don't realize.

So my personal story was I tried it. I didn't do a whole lot. I did it in my eye region and I still today in my left eye, have this ball of filler crap that circulates around and so some mornings I wake up and my left eye is swollen. Why? Because that ball of filler tissue has nestled its way right above my orbital rim. I literally have to like shove it in and underneath my eye socket. Then of course, there's a bit of inflammation with it because by the way, this stuff is not natural. Your body doesn't look at it as natural. That's why it becomes a ball is your body's literally isolating it off.

That's why these people who do filler, the only way to really do filler movie-star style is to invest thousands of dollars a month to continually keep layering it in, to try to hide the fact that it becomes super uneven and ball like and lumpy and frustrating and manipulatable.

Maybe my filler artist wasn't as artistic as the Hollywood elite's pros. That's possible. But I look at the Hollywood elite and all I can tell you is occasionally they nail it, right? Occasionally somebody has the perfect amount of filler and you're like, "Wow, they definitely look better." But nine times out of ten, they just look like a big blah face. Like there's no more definition. There's no more uniqueness. Everyone looks the same. Everybody has these big rounded cheeks starting from inside the eye, going all the way across. Please, just no.

One of the classic examples is people fill their lips up and they're like, "Oh, I fill up my lip." First of all, it looks usually like duck lip and almost never looks good. Then it migrates towards the nose and so they have to fill their lip up again. Then that migrates towards the nose. The next thing you know, they have this big fat, upper lip of filler that they have to get injected with hyaluronidase, the thing that breaks filler down, it's nuts.

I'm telling you, filler is not precise. It migrates. It's a scar-tissue like substance, and it can take a decade to go away. Like it can take forever for your body to break it down. You don't want to be using hyaluronidase because your skin does have hyaluronic acid in it. It is an important part.

The glycosaminoglycan family is an important part of the volume density of your dermis. You don't want to be injecting a bunch of enzymes that break that down. You could thin your skin by doing that. I don't even know what the studies say on that. If there are any

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studies of, "Well, when you use hyaluronidase, they're more likely to see dermal atrophy in that region." That would scare me and I would think it's a possibility.

So... Filler. Try not to do it. Trust me when I say [Osmosis Recovery](#) will refill your fat pads in a targeted way, only the stuff that's lost. Keep your natural beauty. No, it doesn't make your face fat. No, it doesn't add to the subcutaneous fat so you look like you gained 10 pounds. It literally adds to the structural fat that is what you lose as you age and only that. And it's amazing.

I just encourage you to stay away from fillers. There are so many people who regret fillers. There are so many people who are like, "Oh, that's the only thing that makes my wrinkles look better." Well, that's because they are using lasers and traumatic peels to keep their skin young. I promise you, this holistic medical strategy is such an amazing way to do age reversal.

That's filler. Try to stay away. By the way, all these marketing campaigns where people say, "Oh, we have a topical rub-in filler. BS. BS marketing. None of that's true.

Number 2, Botox. One of my favorite things to hate. I've been hating it for a decade. I swear I thought there would be a class action lawsuit by now. I'm not calling for one. I so appreciate now how you have to be so careful because ultimately this substance does have a level of popularity that is almost mind boggling, and that is... Botox.

Botulinum toxin. When I say Botox, I'm referring to botulinum toxin, I'm not trying to represent a particular brand. I'm not calling out a particular company. I'm talking about the poison itself and why you would not want to poison your face if you can help it.

Now as a physician, back in my days when I was doing PMNR residency, I would inject the muscles of cerebral palsy children who had spasms and it helped them to hold things better if it was in their hands, or it might help them to walk better if you could take away the muscle activation that was firing and keeping them from having reasonable gait, essentially. So some amazing uses for Botox.

It's still going to likely get into the bloodstream. It's still likely to get into the lymphatics and it's still going to find its way to some nerve somewhere. But in theory, putting it in your hand or in your leg or foot is a whole lot safer than putting it in your face, right next to your brain. It's not a good idea.

It's so amazing to me how few doctors know about and how even fewer patients know about the study that was done out of the UK that showed Botox, when injected, goes to

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your brainstem. It absolutely goes to your brainstem. They proved it in the clinical research and that should give you some pause.

That could eventually lead to swallowing difficulties. It could lead to tremors. I personally believe that there is a growing incidence of mild head tremors, and I don't have any evidence to support this, this isn't like based on a study, this is just my own anecdotal sort of viewpoint of it, but I believe that when you continually do Botox and it over a period of say a decade, you get to a level of neurologic damage where you might start seeing a little bit of a tremor, a little head tremor. I don't know if you might even see some swallowing difficulties.

No one's going to chalk it up to Botox. They're all going to say, "Oh, you have a slight neurologic condition. Go see a neurologist." But I want you thinking about it because I want you thinking about why you shouldn't do it; because the other epidemic that's happening right now and it's mind mindbogglingly crazy is the prevention of wrinkle Botox usage.

What? Yes, 20-somethings choosing to put Botox into their muscles in an effort to prevent wrinkles in the future. They have no idea. No one's telling them. They didn't get to my podcast yet. Hello, young people if you're here today... Please stop doing Botox, because what Botox actually does is it causes muscle atrophy.

One of the main problems with aging face is atrophy. Volume loss is why your face sags and your nasolabial folds increase. You look more gaunt, your lip lines magnify, your jowls enlarge, and your forehead collapses over your eyes. All of those things are exacerbated by the use of Botox because the volume of your facial muscle is a huge part of the volume of your face.

In other words, your skin is a covering, a layering over a bunch of different things that give it volume. One of the most important things to give your face volume is your muscle. There's two points to it because it also holds your face up. Your face muscle is literally what is holding your face up from sagging and falling off. Right?

I remember a quote from Stevie Nicks where she said, "Oh my God, Botox ruined me. Every time I laugh or sneeze, I feel my forehead collapse over my eyes and I have to pull it back."

I don't know how much she was exaggerating. I haven't seen her lately, but it wouldn't surprise me because when you weaken the muscles over and over again, they die. Botox is a killer of muscle. It's not a temporary weakener of muscle, it's a killer of muscle.

The wrinkle between your eyes and the wrinkle on your forehead is 80% caused by fat pads. The muscles aren't overreacting. Yes, it's true that if you're somebody who's a frowner, the

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more your muscles pull your brows together, you could see a deeper divot in between them. But the deeper divot is more about how the fat pad volume is gone. So the muscles are now reflecting this pinch of your dermal matrix more completely, but if you had the fat pad, you wouldn't see it.

It's not perfect. [Recovery](#) doesn't fix your elevens probably 100%. We'd go for 80% recovery of that. It definitely is the choice over putting a toxin that is neurologic toxin right next to your brain, into the bloodstream, right there. That seems nuts to me.

This volume loss is critical. You don't get it back. You're just poisoning your muscles to death. Your face starts sagging more. Your wrinkles become more pronounced and all you can think is, "Oh, I guess I need to do Botox on more parts of my face." That is the mistake you make. So the last thing I'm going to say on that is that it's ridiculously expensive. What a waste of dollars to do that.

Okay. Final piece as I wrap things up and here we go. Number one problem... Lasers.

Number 1, Lasers are so common. Everyone is convinced that lasers create collagen. They think of the heat like a tightening; like I take a wet t-shirt, a wet cotton shirt and I throw it in the dryer and that heat gets it all tight or my jeans get tight from that heat. And yes, your skin gets tight, but it gets tight from the wounding of it.

Really what the problem is that you wounded the skin in such a significant way, there's fluid as it's doing its "emergency burn response", and yeah, you burned a bunch of good collagen. I guess the idea, I think people have become convinced that their face is full of a bunch of damaged collagen.

Even though your whole skin is designed to replace damaged collagen 24/7, somehow we've come to this conclusion that we just have a whole bunch of damaged collagen and all we need to do is burn it all away, then new collagen comes in.

Or they focus on this idea that when I burn the skin and I measure collagen production, I see an increase. If it's 25 or 30% increase in collagen and "Oh my gosh, it must be rejuvenating."

No, no. These lasers are super dangerous. And you know, you get into this Fraxel stuff where now you're doing these isolated burn holes that can cause orange peeling, which is like this dimpling of the skin that's permanent; or you're burning the laser deep enough because it's a CO2 form of laser. Sometimes these high intensity ultrasound lasers where they burn so deeply, they're burning subcutaneous fat.

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So you get this uneven lumpiness of your face permanently. Or you burn your collagen so severely that you literally age your skin permanently. You do five years of aging in one application, maybe even worse in some people.

Then there's the people who don't really have great immune systems. They're not healing like they should heal. Then they get these retraction scars.

I mean, I get the emails. I'm talking to people whose lives just are seemingly destroyed by it. I try to encourage, and I think we make progress and making recovery on their wounds, but yes, it is the most common procedure being done today. It is only burning the skin. It is going to most likely leave hypopigmentation, hyperpigmentation behind. It is most likely going to leave atrophy of your dermis behind.

Yes, occasionally I've seen some pretty cool results where you burn the bejesus of the skin so badly that it kind of scarred over and it was almost like a tightening of acne scarring. You know what I mean? Like the scarring on top of the acne scarring, made the acne scarring look better or the scarring somehow pulled the skin a little more taught.

But there's a reason why CO2 lasers have gone out of favor because they are mostly a big disaster. Most people I talk to, and of course I'm going to draw in these people, but most people I talked to regret their laser procedure. They spent thousands of dollars and all they did was make themselves older. So most laser procedures are a no.

I'm talking about the collagen-generating ones. You know, they go in and you do your little Fraxel and they want to do three series. The first one, not so bad. The second one, "Oh, I'm not sure the outcome was what I was hoping." The third one, all of a sudden, now you're left permanently scarred.

I just can't encourage you enough to do your research. Don't buy into, "Hey, this is the next latest and greatest. Oh my gosh, you've got to come get it."

Where the greed comes in, is these poor doctors are duped into believing that these lasers are rejuvenating. They invest a lot of money in the lasers. The lasers have a short lifespan because the next coolest rejuvenating laser that they have to have in their clinic to be up-to-date is three years away. So they got three years to get enough revenues out of this machine to pay for it. Then they overcharge, they're overusing them and the results are just not good. I'm going to close out on that. That is my top 10.

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Avoid:

10. Steroids.
9. Scrubs.
8. Retinols.
7. Alpha hydroxy acid and Jessner peels, and alpha hydroxy acid daily use.
6. TCA and phenol peels.
5. IPLs.
4. Retinoic acid.
3. Fillers.
2. Botox.
1. Lasers.

If you can do your best to stay away from these procedures when you're trying to make yourself young and beautiful and get true age reversal, trust me when I say you will make way more progress with a holistic medical strategy. I hope you take that to heart.

As usual, you can write me at askdrben@osmosisbeauty.com with any questions you may have about your beauty routine, about your health, about how we can get you looking and feeling amazing as you go into those, whatever decade really. I'm helping whatever decade needs my help, whatever person reaches out. I know they're following their inner voice. That's why I think our success rate is so high.

Also check me out on Insta Lives, go by the website at osmosisbeauty.com and try the [Skin Quiz](#) and see what that gets you. We do this really innovative inside-out approach and the changes we're making to reverse aging are phenomenal and I want you to participate in that with me because it's been a fun journey. Hope you enjoyed it.

We'll talk next week.

Ben Johnson, MD