


# deep in concentration

New molecular skincare and treatments are targeting the deepest layers of the dermis in a bid to restore radiance, clarity and tone. **Lucia van der Post** reports. Illustration by **Jacey**



**F**or the crusaders at the leading edge of skincare science, the holy grail is getting the right products into the deepest layers of the dermis, where the big hope is that they can then interfere with, or reverse, the ageing process. It sounds simple enough, but can prove extraordinarily difficult in practice.

This is why companies and dermatologists are investing more and more of their efforts into molecular research. If you are wondering what molecular beauty entails, dermatologist Dr Barbara Sturm (pictured overleaf), whose patients from around the world make their way either to her clinic in Düsseldorf or to see her during her regular week-long sojourns at London's Dorchester Hotel, puts it thus: "When we speak about molecular beauty, we are talking about addressing the deeper cell layers and the biomolecules, including DNA and proteins."

Sturm believes that inflammation is one of the main causes of ageing and so has developed a method of specifically targeting



Above: Dr David Colbert. Left: Colbert MD Stimulate The Serum, £115 for 30ml. Soothe Night cream, £125 for 30ml

cells at a deeper level by using a patient's own blood or, more specifically, a patient's plasma, which she spins off from the blood. By utilising the body's anti-inflammatory and regenerative proteins, the procedure starts what she calls "a cascade of effects, going all the way down into the deeper

layers of the skin, soothing the inflammation and working on the regeneration processes". After Sturm has seen a patient and taken a blood sample, she creates an individually targeted version of her MC1 Cream, which – besides incorporating the patient's own proteins – contains what she calls a "telomerase activator" that she claims works to stimulate the age-regulating enzyme telomerase in the cells. (In 2009, a Nobel Prize was awarded to three scientists on the basis of studies about the function of telomeres, the protective end caps on DNA strands, and the enzyme telomerase.) The initial personalised MC1 Cream costs £950 for 50ml; subsequent preparations are £850. Sturm also has an off-the-shelf skincare range – although it does not utilise a customer's own proteins, it is highly researched and contains natural ingredients such as purslane and skullcap, which are said to promote the formation of telomerase. It includes Hyaluronic Acid Ampoules (£132 for seven x 2ml), Face Cream (£132 for 50ml), Cleanser (£40 for 150ml) and Facial Scrub (£45 for 100ml).

Dr Rabia Malik (pictured top right), who has her own aesthetic medicine practice and is a consultant at the medical clinic at Grace Belgravia, also works with patients' blood to stimulate the growth of collagen. She has a system for separating platelets from a patient's red

blood cells using special vials that she imports from the US. "They allow for a more consistent recovery of the platelets," she says. She then combines the application of the resulting plasma, which is left on for about 45 minutes, with a micro-needling treatment. "There is no downtime needed," she points out, "and I have noticed consistently good results. Because this is an autologous treatment using patients' own blood cells, the chances of an adverse reaction are very small." Her Meso-PRP (Platelet Rich Plasma) treatment takes about two hours (blood has to be put into the special vials to separate out the platelets) and costs £900 for Grace Belgravia members or £1,000 for non-members (a special May promotion is offering it for £750 to members and

*The treatments work with patients' blood to stimulate the growth of collagen*

non-members alike). After that a treatment every six months is ideal, but for something more intensive, or to treat a specific concern, three sessions, six to eight weeks apart, are recommended.

Malik is also a proponent of "chirally correct" skincare. "Each molecule [in a skincare ingredient] has a left and a right side," she says, "but the skin contains receptors for only one side of the molecule, so chirally correct products are ones that contain only the side of the molecule that the skin has receptors for." This means these products need only half the number of active ingredients to achieve the desired results, so the potential for side effects is considerably reduced." She recommends the small, focused range by Julia T Hunter MD, which she says has superior formulations and really works; her hero product is Maximal Strength Serum (£140 for 29.5ml). She also likes the Results Rx range from the US – the Eye Doctor (£130 for 7ml) is perfect for lines and dark circles and is her bestselling eye treatment.

New York dermatologist Dr David Colbert (pictured above left), like Sturm, sees calming inflammation as key to keeping skin looking young. He's worked a good deal in the film industry, caring for the skins of stars while they are bombarded with special cosmetic treatments for the roles they play. He looked after Angelina Jolie, for instance, in *Salt*, in which she had to wear very heavy make-up for long periods. He has developed a line of products that he believes delivers change at the molecular level. "I looked around and saw a lot of what I call



Dr Barbara Sturm. Below: Dr Barbara Sturm Face Cream, £132 for 50ml. Hyaluronic Acid Ampoules, £132 for seven x 2ml ampoules



Above: Dr Rabia Malik. Right: Results Rx Eye Doctor, £130 for 7ml. Julia T Hunter MD Maximal Strength Serum, £140 for 29.5ml

snake-oil salesmen who sold products that didn't work," he says. "I wanted to create simple skincare that really did the job. For this, I had to have a system that delivered the actual ingredients directly into the dermis."

He believes his patented Triad system does just that. "I use active ingredients that have a similar structure to cell membranes or liposomes," he explains, "so that they have the same level of compatibility, allowing them to penetrate more deeply into the skin. Triad acts like a Trojan horse – it hides the active ingredients that would otherwise get eaten up on the way down, thus tricking the skin into allowing them deeper into the epidermis, where they are released to do their job. Once there, they stimulate the production of collagen fibres and provide a friendly environment for further collagen production." The result is a skincare line that, he claims, fights inflammation, slows ageing and restores radiance, clarity and tone to the skin.

Nicky Kinnaird, founder of SpaceNK (which she has now sold) and someone who knows a thing or three about effective beauty products, is such a believer in Colbert's line that she is now working with him. "We've woken up to the fact that in the UK – as in America – we've been heavy-handed with beauty treatments and that we need to treat our faces more gently. Dr Colbert has a huge practice in New York and often deals with people who have done too much to their skin and have heightened skin sensitivities. The Colbert MD line is all about healing and nurturing." There's Stimulate The Serum (£115 for 30ml) to boost collagen, a day cream (£80 for 50ml) to nourish and protect, a night cream (£125 for 30ml) to heal and hydrate, and Tone Control Facial Discs (£65 for 20) to even and brighten skin.

As the science of skincare has advanced, so have expectations of what a pot of night cream can do – it's now becoming possible to look in the mirror and treat the skin on a much deeper – indeed cellular – level. ♦

**DEEP IMPACT**

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