

WHAT DOES COSMETIC DERMATOLOGY MEAN

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Cosmetic dermatology has become such an imprecise term that I would like to redefine it. Much of the confusion seems to be associated with cosmetic pharmacology which concerns the biological activity of topically applied agents that are not considered to be drugs.

Terminology

The medical community in general and dermatologists and cosmetic chemists in particular have been unable to determine the tasks that should be assigned to the field of cosmetology. The rapid spread of computer literacy and even the advent of the fibre optic network have not simplified the problem. Yvan Privat (1) has suggested that such terminology as medical and pharmaceutical cosmetology to distinguish between protective and decorative cosmetology. More recently, Maibach has argued that the title of his book *Cosmetic Dermatology* is paradoxical; dermatology - a science versus cosmetology - an art. (2) Parish and Lask avoided the problem by choosing the title *Aesthetic Dermatology* for their text. (3)

During the 1st International Congress of the International Society of Cosmetic Dermatology (ISCD) in 1986, Luis Calvo (4) suggested the term *cosmoceutical* in order to define a cosmetic product containing active ingredients. At the same meeting, Kligman and Graham (5) explained the psychological and therapeutic benefits of a cosmetic make-over. They also promoted the concept of decorative cosmetology as being a medical science and not merely an art.

The term

Is Cosmetic Dermatology really a paradox? I created the term in 1983. It became a reality with the founding of the International Society of Cosmetic Dermatology in 1985 (6 renumber) and the initiation of the international periodical *Journal of Applied Cosmetology*, (5 renumber) as the official publication of the ISCD (6,7). Actually, I had previously suggested the term at a meeting of the North American Clinical Dermatology Society in Monterey, California (8). With the Journal being in its thirteenth year and the Society's 5th International Congress being held in Montecatini October 26-29, the term has become well-established.

Redefinition

Directives from the European Community (EC) headquarters indicate that the role of cosmetics will differ from those of drugs (9,10).

Cosmetics have the primary function of keeping up a good appearance, changing the appearance, or correcting body odors. In addition, a cosmetic may clean, perfume, and protect. To quote the regulation concerning a cosmetic (11):

That product which has a preventative action can therefore be considered cosmetic, because its activity is not exclusively directed at prevention and is instead collateral or subsidiary. In fact, one can

certainly accept that a cosmetic prepared with the purpose and characteristics adequate for the care of body hygiene is supportive in the prevention of disease.

Should further doubt exist in the interpretation of the preventative actions performed by a cosmetic, the mechanism of action will be taken into consideration: this will be such as to make possible the unequivocal distinction between cosmetic and drug.

From what has been said, one can therefore gather that, as far as the preventative activity is concerned, the ambiguity between the two definitions is only apparent and not fundamental.

Recommendation

Pharmacology should no longer be used to explain the activity of a cosmetic; pharmacology really applies only to a drug (12). Cosmetology denotes the study of a discipline and not the activity of a cosmetically active principle. Let “**cosmetognosis**” be used to define the activity of a cosmetic with a new and unequivocal meaning, and keep cosmetic dermatology for its original purpose, the cosmetic aspects of the study of dermatology.

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