

Why can't we have what they're having?

The laws that police our beauty buys are the toughest – and safest – in the world. But does that mean we're also missing out?



It seems so unfair – a flick through US magazines or an internet trawl reveals a crock of serious-sounding anti-ageing products claiming clinical-grade results. Endorsed by dermatologists and hailed as breakthroughs by the beauty press, they just might be the solutions to our toughest beauty problems. So why can't we have them here?

Blame it on post-recessionary parsimony – it's not hard to see why 'professional-strength results at home' is the beauty industry's hottest claim now. Physician-dispensed skincare brands – think SkinCeuticals, pH Advantage and Proxi – are thriving in clinics, medspas and salons in hot destinations not just for jabs, but for everyday skin needs. They're the nearest we get to clinical-grade anti-ageing here. Yet in the US, finding serious wrinkle-uncooching action is as easy as popping into a chemist.

The difference? Rules and regulations that often leave industry

experts scratching their heads. "The EU Cosmetics Directive states that products are either medicines or cosmetics. Any medical claim makes a cosmetic a drug," explains Dr Sara Roberts, principal scientist at P&G, manufacturer of Olay. "But the US Food & Drug Administration has always accepted that cosmetics can make successful changes and have a third category for cosmeceuticals – that's cosmetics with a physiological action." In the UK, cosmetics can contain ingredients used medically (such as salicylic acid or hydrogen peroxide) but limits are strictly capped and potential side effects must appear on the pack.

So far so clear, but it's how well European cosmetics work that gets them into deep and murky waters. "Here, a product is judged according to the depth and duration of its results," explains Julie McManus, head of scientific and technical regulatory affairs at L'Oréal. A cream, for example, can have a physiological effect and change the skin's structure, so long as it's not permanent. "You can have a mild, but significant effect on the skin. If it's there, it's there's no going back." The Cancer Research UK apply to the Health Protection Agency for long, costly products not pharmacology sold only in such as chemists. "It is fast-moving more straight directly counts the product shelves," adds for R&D exp supporting at the Advert

Beauty

WE WISH WE HAD... FADE-OUT FORMULAS FOR AGE SPOTS

Banned in cosmetics in the EU in 2001 because of its irritability, burning, skin thinning and cancer, hydroquinone is nevertheless the only FDA-approved skin-lightening ingredient. Cosmetics containing up to two per cent hydroquinone are sold in chemists in the US and it's routinely prescribed in clinics on both sides of the Atlantic. For her pigmentation patients, UK dermatologist Dr Stefano Williams often mixes

a cocktail of four per cent hydroquinone with tretinoin and hydrocortisone – a tried-and-tested formula devised by Ratin-A-super Professor Albert Kligman. In research, new combinations of anti-pigment ingredients are scoring high in performance trials. In a study presented at the American Academy Of Dermatology conference this January, Clay Professional Pro-X Cosmetics Tone Regimen's combination of niacinamide and Sepiwhite

(which inhibits tyrosine, an amino acid which stimulates melanin production) was found to improve the appearance of age spots as effectively as two per cent hydroquinone after 12 weeks use. Sadly, Clay Pro-X is one more range we'll have to wait for in the meantime. Dr Williams reminds us that the most potent anti-age spot treatment is an SPF50 broad-spectrum sunscreen. "Without sun damage, there are no pigmentation spots," she says.

THE NEXT BEST THING...

The most effective formulas contain exfoliating ingredients alongside skin brighteners. Look for melanin inhibitors such as kojic acid, mulberry, liquorice and bearberry (also known as uva-ursi, which contains arbutin).

- 1 Clinique Even Better Clinical Dark Spot Corrector, £37.50. A 50ml 30 per cent improvement in 12 weeks equals results from hydroquinone, it's claimed. \$ from CliniqueLuxuriously.
- 2 Pro Brightening Serum, £28. This exfoliating and brightening formula contains L-Aspartic Acid, which blocks tyrosine. Those tested showed an improvement in skin clarity after four weeks.
- 3 SkinCeuticals Pigment Regulator, £80. Studies found the two per cent kojic acid formula blocks tyrosine as effectively as four per cent hydroquinone over a period of 12 weeks.



WE WISH WE HAD... REAL THICKER LONGER LASHES

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