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the BACK story

Environ turns 20 this year! We ask Doctor Des Fernandes, plastic surgeon and developer of the range, how it all began – and what exciting new developments he has in store.

A proudly South African brand, Environ enjoys worldwide success and has a host of international and local celebrity followers, too.

The inspiration behind this brand was two young patients with melanoma who, despite Dr Fernandes's attempts to treat them, passed away before they turned 23.

He began researching the mechanisms of skin cancer and the skin and discovered that vitamin A can successfully treat small cancers. 'I started thinking about photoageing and skin cancer, which were in fact the same disease, just in varying degrees. Simple photoageing causes wrinkles, but in-depth photoageing can progress



Dr Des Fernandes (below left) and avid Environ users, actress Jana Strydom (top), model Tanya van Graan (inset) and actress Corine du Toit (bottom).

to cancer,' Dr Fernandes explains.

In his research into the link between ageing and vitamin A, Dr Fernandes came across information from 1955 showing that topically-applied Retinol Palmitate (the storage form of vitamin A) could regenerate old skin. In 1976 he began using it to successfully treat patients with acne and scarring, and in 1982 his research was encouraged by a rep for vitamin A acid who relayed the story of a colleague's wife: she had been using vitamin A acid as a rejuvenating skin-care cream and was seeing fantastic results.

At the time there was no vitamin A cream on the market, so Dr Fernandes decided to formulate one especially for his patients. Next, he formulated a cream that could be distributed worldwide to treat problems associated with sun damage. And so Environ was born.

When should you begin a suncare regime?

'As soon as you're exposed to sunlight. If you want young-looking skin when you're old, start looking after your skin when you're young,' he says.

What made you create a make-up range?

'Many people wanted a foundation made by Environ. We asked a cosmetic manufacturer to create a foundation with antioxidants in it. If you're going to use a cosmetic, why not use something that makes your protection from the sun that much better? The idea is that before the sun hits your skin, you've minimised the amount of damage it can do.'

So what's coming up?

'I've been toying with an idea for a few years; its code name is FLIB (Face-Lift In a Bottle) and it should be released next year. We're also going to release a medical product for herpes – the trials have been completed and we're just working on the patent. It will work with just one four-minute application. I think it has a great future.' ❀

