

Clinique sets the pace

Clinique has thrown down the gauntlet to other cosmetics houses in the multi billion-dollar beauty industry, thanks to a research initiative with a leading medical college.

By Mary Jane Pittilla.



Visionary concept: The Clinique Skin Wellness Center at Weill Cornell treats patients and conducts skin research programmes under the direction of Dr Richard Granstein (right), Chairman of the Department of Dermatology at Weill Cornell

In its continuing battle to stay several steps ahead of its increasingly nimble-footed rivals, Clinique – one of the world's most established prestige cosmetics brands – has forged a pioneering partnership with a top US medical college to fund clinical skin research. The alliance is believed to be a first in the cosmetics industry.

Clinique's top executives and representatives of the world's beauty media gathered in New York in January to

witness the opening of the new Clinique Skin Wellness Center, which aims to undertake joint research projects and educate the wider public about skincare issues.

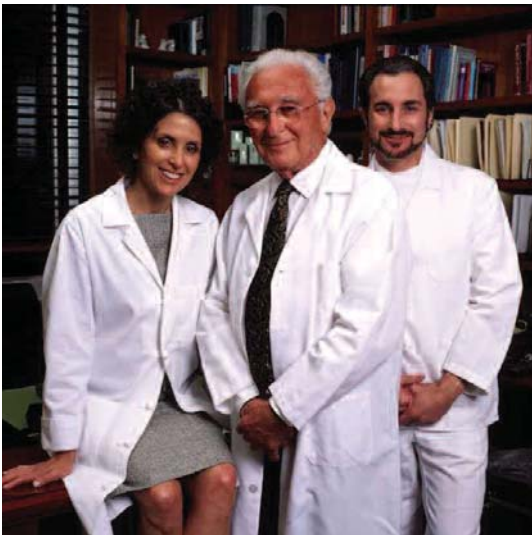
The Manhattan-based Center is a unit of Weill Cornell Medical College's dermatology department, and comprises several examination rooms and a workstation. Doctors will conduct skin examinations and educate patients on how to prevent skin cancer and maintain skin health.

in research

Patients may make follow-up appointments with Clinique representatives to receive advice on areas such as skin camouflage for post-operative scars and to obtain information on skin wellness. Patients can research skin concerns via a kiosk, and pamphlets explaining skincare issues will be available in the waiting room.

At January's opening reception Clinique Global President Lynne Greene told the audience that the partnership aimed to build on Clinique's heritage as a dermatological-driven brand.

Clinique has worked with the Orentreich family of dermatologists since the brand's creation in 1968. Dr Norman Orentreich was the brand's Founding Dermatologist; his son Dr David Orentreich is now its Guiding Dermatologist, and his sister Dr Catherine Orentreich works as a consultant.



The dermatological dynasty that guides Clinique: Dr Norman Orentreich, pictured middle, is the brand's Founding Dermatologist; Dr David Orentreich is its Guiding Dermatologist, and Dr Catherine Orentreich is a consultant

A delicate balance

A year into their new role, many high-powered executives might want to shake things up and make big corporate changes – but not Lynne Greene. As Clinique's Global President, Greene sees herself as the custodian of the brand, which has been around for nearly 40 years and is used by millions of loyal, though ageing, customers. She has a delicate balancing act to perform with a brand that has built up so much trust over time, as she readily admits.

"Clinique has had clients since the beginning, and as they've got older they've needed different types of products, which we have provided. But we want to keep the face of the brand young and we want to recruit younger customers. It's a delicate balance," she told journalists at a brand update meeting in New York, a day after the official opening of the Clinique Skin Wellness Center at Weill Cornell Medical College.

Having studied all aspects of the brand, Greene likes what she sees. "Change is about recognising what's good, what's bad and what's indifferent. Most things are good about Clinique. It has a dermatological heritage; we work with all three Doctors Orentreich. We want cutting-edge science, not from one doctor but from a cadre of experts and dermatologists. The Weill Cornell development will be an opportunity to amplify that position."

As for the in-store Clinique consultants, famously clad in their white lab coats, Greene continued: "We believe in the education we give people. To us it's our nearest and dearest possession."

Also important to Greene is the brand philosophy 'The Power of One', meaning that if just one person in a testing panel develops a skin reaction to a product, it's back to the drawing board.

Working alongside the brand's new Creative Director, Jim Nevins, Greene has sized up the typical Clinique customer and is targeting her accordingly. "Our customer is discerning and smart – and she will read," she said, referring to the company's new text-heavy advertisements for the major brand equities. These ads, though big on words, are full of white space – a colour Greene loves, as it "implies the future". They also aim to project the 'voice' of the brand. Product photography harks back to the gravity-defying still-lives of Clinique products by Irving Penn.

"Simple, effective products that do a job is our objective," Greene concluded.



Guiding lights: Clinique Global President Lynne Greene and Group President Philip Shearer at the opening ceremony of the Clinique Skin Wellness Center in New York on 25 January 2007

All about prevention

“This [affiliation with Weill Cornell] is an incredibly unique opportunity,” said Greene at the reception. “In the past few years there has been a movement in the medical world towards wellness and how to prevent disease, and Clinique is all about prevention. It is appropriate that we partner with one of the world’s leading medical colleges in the fields of skincare, treatment and the science of the skin. We’re talking about Clinique making the connection from the bench to bedside to consumer.”

A key component of the relationship will be in “cutting-edge joint research”, said Greene. The first two projects undertaken with Weill Cornell scientists will focus on the effects of stress on the skin and allergies. Greene described the latter as “a modern worldwide epidemic”.

The Clinique Skin Wellness Center will also function as “a centre without walls”, she said, explaining that

Clinique’s ‘skin diva’ reveals what women want

Clinique has Debbie D’Aquino and her colleagues to thank for its constant flow of innovative products. The brand’s ‘skin diva’ holds the title Vice President of Clinique Product Development for Treatment, Skin Supplies for Men, and Fragrance Worldwide.

D’Aquino guides Clinique scientists to develop products women need and want. Recent products she’s helped innovate include Superdefense Triple Action Moisturizer SPF 25, Repairwear Deep Wrinkle Concentrate and the Derma White franchise.

The Moodie Report interviewed her about her work.

Please describe your typical day – if there is one!

There is hardly anything typical, but a day might begin with an early morning conference call with one of our overseas markets – to talk through a new product launch, describe some of the technical background of our formulas in more detail than can be written and read about... or it could start with an early morning meeting with the Doctors Orentreich – we usually need to see them before they start seeing patients.

During the day I spend time with the Marketing Department designing new product launch calendars for the different regions of the globe. I strategise with the Education Department on how best to position and sell products to our clients. I have brainstorming sessions with my team and R&D on

the topic of the day – whether it be how to fill a consumer need gap, how to strengthen Clinique core equity businesses, where to put a brand new technology.

At least once a week I’m physically with the chemists and researchers at our Long Island facility in order to get more hands-on as to what’s new and exciting in the area of cosmetic skincare. I spend time reviewing the competition with my team. I read a slew of industry magazines as well as medical papers and fashion journals, and at the end of the day I sometimes take a ride over to Weill Cornell Medical College to strategise our next steps regarding our partnership. But my focus is simple: what can I do to make this Clinique brand a better brand and more relevant to our clients?

Can you tell me how you go about learning what women want?

A lot about this industry is gut instinct because it’s such an emotionally driven industry. You need to be extremely observant and, whatever you are exposed to, you need to transform it if you can into something that might work in your area of expertise. We conduct focus consumer groups and we sensory test most of the skincare products we develop. We also connect with the medical community, with prestigious universities – all to gain a better insight as to what women and men want from their skincare.

annual Clinique-sponsored lectures will take place to educate the public about how to care for the skin and prevent disease.

Explaining the overall aim of the Center, Greene emphasised the non-commercial aspect. "We're not going to talk about [Clinique] products. It's all about helping people."

As part of the Weill Cornell relationship, Clinique is funding a Clinique Clinical Scholarship, whose first incumbent is Dr John Carucci.

Education, education, education

In a second ground-breaking initiative, Greene unveiled details of a programme to further develop the knowledge of the Clinique brand's 20,000 in-store consultants.

"We want to have the best-educated consultants in the industry," asserted Greene.

Clinique fact file

Brand owner: The Estée Lauder Companies, US

Founded: 1968

Marketing tagline: 'Great skin can be created'

Points of difference: All products are clinically formulated, allergy tested and 100% fragrance free; unique 3-Step Skin Care regimen; dermatologist created and inspired; custom fit for every skin type using the Clinique Computer

In-store consultants worldwide: 20,000

Under the new certification programme, which expands on Clinique's already comprehensive training scheme, each Clinique consultant will be able to attain three levels of qualifications on skin issues.

In your opinion, what do women want?

It's basic – women want to look the best they can. They want to be comfortable in their own skin – not transitioned into someone they don't recognise. They want products that make them feel special, that play to their individuality. They want to use products that add to their confidence and self-esteem.

They want simple, uncomplicated products that are easy to use – they want products that talk to their own intelligence. They want credible and reliable products.

What trends are you seeing in product development?

There are a few trends out there depending on a client's age, geography and ethnicity. Some trends are realistic, some are not. For instance, women want desperately to believe that a US\$500 jar of cream will metamorphose them – very unrealistic.

Some women want to believe that a certain treatment product can transform them just like a doctor's procedure can – also very unrealistic.

Most women are not moving away from the face-altering cosmetic procedures – ones that take weeks and months to recover from... but they are also looking more and more for less invasive ways of bringing life back into their skin. Treatment products



Clinique has Debbie D'Aquino and her colleagues to thank for its constant flow of innovative products

are getting closer and closer to doing that.

And men – although slower to the party – are finally becoming aware of how preventive skincare at an earlier age can help keep them looking their best as they age.

Do you get involved in developing travel retail exclusive products?

From time to time we do develop products exclusively for travel retail, but what we do most of is design sets, packages, etc of existing products to better suit the traveller.

Scientists prove that beauty is only skin deep

Science is the cornerstone of the Clinique philosophy. As women increasingly demand products that not only feel good but actually perform, the brand needs proof that its products are effective. That comes from in-depth research and development carried out by some of the world's most highly skilled scientists.

Enter Dr Tom Mammone (pictured right), Clinique's self-styled 'age resister', who presides over the brand's R&D laboratory as Executive Director of Research and Development Worldwide.

Mammone joined Clinique in 1986 and was instrumental in the creation of The Skin Biology Lab, a research group in Melville, New York that grows cells in order to study the ageing process and the biology of the human skin. Like something out of a sci-fi movie, over a million dormant skin cells are kept frozen at -300°C in a large, steaming barrel-type container stored in his lab. In addition, Mammone and his team test the latest technologies and materials to help Clinique produce its formulations. When asked what the next big thing is in skincare, he immediately replies: "Peptides."

Mammone's work does not stop there. He also collaborates regularly with Clinique's labs in Belgium, Romania, Japan and China, as well as outside academic institutions, on topics such as whitening, sagging skin and dark circles. Working with worldwide experts allows Mammone to monitor the latest scientific developments and also understand the different needs of skin types and tones around the globe.

Testing is another major tenet of the Clinique ideology – each



product undergoes an incredible 7,200 tests. That's the remit of "The Experimenter" Rose Marie Sparacio, who is Executive Director of Clinical Research and Testing and puts each and every product claim under the microscope.

Each product can take months of clinical testing and Sparacio works with hundreds of volunteers, making sure that every product lives up to its claim. "I'm testing to make sure Clinique products really work and do what we say they will," she says. "We will not release a product unless we're 100% satisfied with its performance – otherwise it's back to the drawing board. With

Clinique, there's no fluff; we go above and beyond the standard realm of testing product claims."

Sparacio, who carries out 600 studies a year on some 5,000 people, is particularly proud of the hi-tech machinery that surrounds her in the testing lab. The grandly named 'Ballistometer' was created by The Estée Lauder Companies to measure the skin's firmness and elasticity. This machine has now been adopted by many other testing centres worldwide.

Allergy testing is not Sparacio's domain, however. This is carried out by a team of external clinicians including dermatologists and ophthalmologists.

Clinique timeline

1968: Vogue's Carol Phillips and dermatologist Dr Norman Orentreich create the 3-Step Skin Care regimen customisable for dry, oily or combination skin.

1969: International expansion begins. First overseas destination is the UK.

1970: Pioneers products to protect skin from damaging and ageing UV rays.

1973: The first cosmetics company honoured with an invitation from the American Academy of Dermatology to exhibit at the prestigious Dermatology Convention.

1976: The first prestige women's cosmetics company to recognise the different skincare needs of men with the launch of Skin Supplies for Men.

1978: International expansion booms as the firm enters Japan, Venezuela and South Africa.

1986: The first cosmetics company to exhibit at the Academy of Ophthalmology Convention.

1991: Blasts off into space as astronauts test the firm's products en route to the moon.

1996: Launches a website that attracts over 19,000 hits a day.

1998: The first prestige brand to sell products online in the US.

2004: The official sponsor of the Latin Grammy Awards show.

2005: Weill Cornell Medical College and Clinique establish a partnership to further clinical research and education in the area of skin wellness.

2007: The Clinique Skin Wellness Center is officially opened in New York



*Top: Each Clinique product undergoes over 7,000 different tests. To ensure each product lives up to its claims, Rose Marie Sparacio uses hi-tech machinery to carry out 600 studies a year on 5,000 volunteers
Bottom: A scientist at work in Clinique's laboratories*

The programme is available both to consultants directly employed by the brand and to generic shop-floor staff in travel retail locations.

Level One comprises a written test on issues relating to the skin, and Level Two will enable the consultant to assist dermatological patients in areas like chronic acne and sun damage. Level Three will see consultants eligible for additional training with Clinique's leading dermatologists such as the Manhattan-based Orentreich dermatological practice.

Clinique sees the certification programme as a way to boost its customer service at the counter while helping to retain staff. This is expected to be a major asset in travel retail, where service levels have become a more critical issue following the abolition of intra-EU duty free.

The price saving offered on products is not necessarily the number-one incentive to purchase, and a good sales consultant can make or break a (multiple) transaction. ■