

## Cosmeceuticals are No Longer Sustainable!

A column about this horrible word, the curse of cosmetics called cosmeceuticals. It is a word that should never have been invented, but that at least a few cosmetic colleagues claim to have coined. Why am I so negative?

The word suggests that we are talking about cosmetic products with a close to medical activity profile. But a topically applied product is a medical product or it is a cosmetic product, it can't be both. And it certainly can't be in-between. You can't be half medicinal and half cosmetic, in the same sense as you can't be half pregnant. It's a binary system, it is a zero or it is a one and there is nothing in between.

I know, of course, that the above is not completely true. Very often, it is the claim that makes the skin care product a medicinal product whereas without that claim it classifies as a cosmetic product. Please agree with me that this is daft! It suggests that the active ingredient must jump out of the bottle, read the label and subsequently decide whether it will cure or only clean, perfume, change appearance, correct body odor, protect or keep in good condition. Yes, I admit, we have very smart active principles nowadays but this is giving our quasi-drugs a little bit too much credit. An active ingredient is like the average man, it does

### Active or Not?

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what it does and nothing more. And what the average man does is determined by the quality of the women surrounding him. Similarly, whether an active is active is determined by the excipients in the formulation surrounding it. A certain type of man will always try to impress the women in his surroundings, irrespective of being married, single or tired, whereas another type of man will always be shy, dazed, timid, or introvert. That's in his character. Certain types of active ingredients are very active whereas others will do close to nothing, even if pushed into the skin by its surrounding excipients. We call that intrinsic activity. And if you are still not convinced about the similarity between men and active ingredients, just think who of the two genders men think is the more important of the two? And what do cosmetic marketers consider to be the most important component of any efficacious cosmetic product? I rest my case...

Still, it does not explain why I am so negative about the use of the term cosmeceuticals. My reasons are actually quite pragmatic. We really cannot differentiate between a cosmetic and a drug if we accept the fact that a claim made for the product can determine to which category it belongs. Let's not forget that the original definition of a cosmetic and a drug were established before we discovered DNA and that was in 1953! Of course, if our definition of a calculator originates from the time we were still using the abacus, how can we anticipate multifunctional computers to fall somewhere within that definition? Don't solve the problem by introducing a super-abacus aka the cosmeceutical! Change the definition! If we can hardly define the difference between a medical product and a cosmetic product, why should we be able to differentiate between a cosmetic active and a cosmeceutical on the one hand and a cosmeceutical and a drug on the other? We should adapt our definitions of the terms cosmetic and medical products and bring them into the 21st century. That should solve the problem. The term cosmeceutical is no longer sustainable and should be banned. The only question is, will we get to a new definition before the 21st century is over?

In the mean time, we should work on completely different things. We all know that green chemistry and sustainability are of utmost importance nowadays. Also in our industry, we aim to be CO<sub>2</sub> neutral.