

GUEST EDITORIAL COMMENT:

## Harmful Skin Care Practices in Nigeria



**Prof Olayinka Abimbola Olasode** MBBCh, FWACP, FACP, IFAAD

Department of Dermatology & Venereology,  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife

**S**kin care is a range of regular practices that help support skin integrity, enhance its appearance and relieve skin discomfort. The desperate search for effective beauty products may result in the inclusion of harmful ones.

Egyptians were the first to cultivate beauty extravagantly, using cosmetics as part of their personal beautification habits and religious ceremonies. As early as 3000 BC, Egyptians used minerals, insects, and berries to create makeup for their eyes, lips, and skin. They stained their hair and nails a rich, warm red with henna. They infused essential oils from plants' leaves, bark, and blossoms for use as perfumes and purification purposes. Queen Nefertiti (circa 1400 BC) stained her nails red by dipping her fingertips in henna, wearing lavish makeup designs, and using custom-blended essential oils. Castor oil, Sesame oil and Moringa oil were used to stop wrinkles and prevent the skin from ageing. Soap pastes were made from Clay and Olive Oil and used to cleanse the skin. Dead Sea salt was used to exfoliate (1). Every item probably had potential side effects.

The Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria have had a rich tradition of using oils, soaps, fragrances, and beads to enhance their beauty. The African black soap (Ose Dudu), Dudu Osun, shear butter (Ori), palm kernel oil, coconut oil, Tiros (eyeliners), Efun and tattoos are part of the ingredients (2). The tattoos are for tribal marks and beauty scarifications on the skin and can lead to complications, including hypertrophic scars and keloids. Applying "tiro" to the eyelashes can cause physical irritation or allergy to the ground substances and the transmission of infection by the applicator from one person to another. With potential allogenic properties, henna is much less used than in the far north amongst the Hausa, Fulani, and Nupe. It imparts a reddish-brown colour to the skin and nail plates but can result in redness, itching, burning, swelling, blisters, and skin scarring. Henna is unsafe when taken by mouth. Applying henna to the skin of infants and children with G6PD deficiency can cause their red blood cells to burst. Henna might decrease how well the body gets rid of lithium (3).

Ancient skin care practices in Northern Nigeria included the Hamman steam bath that used argan oil, clay mask and other natural ingredients (4). Potential side effects of a Hammam bath include dizziness, fainting, increased heart rate, low blood pressure, particularly for individuals with pre-existing heart conditions, high blood pressure, respiratory issues, or pregnant women; discomfort or irritation from the scrubbing process if done too vigorously; and potential skin reactions to soaps or oils used during the treatment if allergies are present (4).

Among the Hausa-Fulani women of Zaria, Nigeria, women are subjected to the "wakan-jego", hot scalding bathe when they return home after childbirth. Their thighs, buttocks and breasts are the most susceptible areas where these hot-water scald burns are the worst (5). Women in Borno state of Nigeria traditionally have their traditional beauty procedures, including Halawa and

Dilke, a body scrub made with potatoes, cloves, turmeric, and oils, and Durkhaan, a smoke bath made from sandalwood to tighten skin. Halawa is a hair-removal wax made from melted sugar, honey, and lime, and Dilke is a body scrub made from potatoes, cloves, turmeric, and oils. Some of these practices can be harmful because they can be contaminated with bacteria and spores.

Harmful skin care practices in rural Nigeria include improper use of baby products. In Ekiti, Nigeria, babies were treated with a wide range of substances, including engine oil and menthol-based balms. In some cases, babies are treated with multiple substances on different parts of their body (6)

Various researchers in Nigeria revealed a consistently high prevalence of skin bleaching practices. Denials and ignorance plague proper documentation. The ease of accessibility stems from the availability and affordability of the creams in the marketplace (7). The extended application of anti-ageing products may cause heightened sensitivity in the skin, elevate the likelihood of developing skin cancer, and contribute to a range of additional health complications over time. Implementing a massive health education campaign about the dangers of using these products and enforcing government legislation would be necessary (7).

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