

## Editorial

### Vanity fare

In the romantic, historical and philosophic worlds memorable utterances can be priceless. In the world we live in today, however, prices are ubiquitous. It is sobering that there is no love lost in hard-core financial matters. Money talks, and money walks. Before all these earthly considerations take full charge of our senses we might pause and be embraced by the sanctity of medical professionalism.

For those folks who are fortunate enough not to be vision impaired their lives can be upliftingly colourful. Meanwhile it is well to acknowledge that true colours are a blessed gift that should be cherished, and allowed to be long-lived and unadulterated. Colouring is child's play and artificial colouring of the skin for vanity reasons deserves mature analysis.

Physical beauty is a subjective notion. It is a perception which has been glorified to become an enviable human quality. By contrast, a beautiful mind with a generous soul may struggle to compete. In recent years, skin colour has emerged as a vanity accessory and not just a potential divisive curse inflicted upon "coloured" people. Inherent in the supercilious domain of beauty is fickleness, just like fashion colours. Not that long ago in the western world being fair-skinned was upper class. Just over fifty years ago when I first arrived in Australia, colloquially, "fair enough" was often good enough. These days, tan is a ten!

We may be justifiably concerned about genetically modified foods and worship all

things natural. Almost hypocritically and a result of systematic brainwashing, images of artificially modified hair and skin colours have infiltrated and corrupted the minds of fashionistas. Tan chasing is an unsafe pursuit. It certainly must not become an Olympic sport for fair-skin amateurs. In any case bronze is regrettably just bronze. It is not a gold medal. It is indeed only third best. Culinarily, peaches and cream are delectable and still tops for some. Take a look at Australian actresses such as Cate Blanchett and Nicole Kidman. They exemplify the cinematic appeal of fair skin.

In the realm of marketing and advertising, authenticity is paramount. Consumers are constantly in search of the real thing. The latter eclipses fake copies and other pretenders. Forgivably though, in the context of skin tanning faking is better than baking: it is definitely safer than having repeated solarium exposures, particularly for those with a history of melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers. Tragically, unsafe tanning can take a life to a premature conclusion.

During the hotter months in contemporary Australia, many young women have fallen victim to their belief that it is literally, but perhaps misguidedly, cool to bare arms and expose the upper chest. The photo-ageing and other harmful effects of the summer sun on the skin are surreptitiously banished to oblivion. There have been heated debates on this subject which should have been prominent on the radars of health professionals. Sun protective fabrics in

attractive colours and design are available and they should be suitably promoted in sun-drenched countries. Furthermore, there is an opportunity for dermatologists to engage with hat and clothing designers to advance the importance of skin health for the greater good of society.

Medical dermatology yearns for more love, support and scientific understanding. There is

no argument against seeking happiness through looking good and feeling confident. However, at what cost may be in question. Vanity does have a price, hence vanity fare. But how much should we pay and sacrifice, and at what expense in the field of medicine? Please answer me my dear colleagues.

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