

THE HUMAN FACE OF *Sesderma*

A heartwarming interview with Dr. Gabriel Serrano

BY Delna Mistry Anand

“I feel I have a moral duty to help those who have not had the same luck or opportunities as I have in life...”

Born into a rich legacy of doctors, his was an early calling to the field, and it began in his home country of Colombia. From sneaking into his family library to explore medicine books at the age of 12, to becoming an internationally renowned authority in the field of cosmetic dermatology, Dr Gabriel Serrano has had an inspiring journey. Even after 40 years in the business, he continues to build and grow as much as he continues to give back to society.

Delna Mistry Anand: You were born into a family of doctors, when did you know you wanted to follow their legacy?

Dr. Gabriel Serrano: I was barely 12 years old when I would prefer to spend my free time reading medicine

books in my family library. These are the books my father and grandfather read, so I gravitated towards them with great interest. There was no question in my mind as to what I wanted to do in life. When I turned sixteen, I left for Spain where I undertook medical studies specializing in dermatology at the University of Valencia. After graduation, I worked at the University General Hospital of Valencia, as a resident doctor and eventually became the Head of Dermatology and Emergency Services where I worked for over 25 years.

DMA: When did you realize that you wanted to open your own clinic?

Dr. G S: After almost three decades of working and addressing skin conditions of more than 40,000 patients, I opened my own dermatological clinic in Valencia in 1976. Around this time, I started to realize that there were so many skin issues that did not have the appropriate



Dr. Gabriel Serrano,
Founder of Sesderma

product or solution. These products did not exist in the market and so I decided to create them. This led to the birth of *Sesderma Laboratories* in 1989. As you see, it began simply as a solution for the concerns of my patients.

DMA: 'Listening to your skin' is Sesderma's ethos. Tell us what this means for you.

Dr. G S: Sesderma now has a remarkable history of over three decades and has emerged as a dominant force in over 85 global markets. We are dedicated to intensive research, development, formulation, and manufacturing of advanced dermocosmetic products, nanonutraceuticals, and medical-aesthetic cosmetics.

Back in 2008, Sesderma made history with the introduction of complete product lines utilizing the power of nanotechnology. This groundbreaking achievement revolutionized the industry, allowing ingredients to effectively penetrate the skin's protective layer, ensuring their utmost efficacy. Unlike superficial offerings from other cosmetic lines, Sesderma's liposomal products go beyond mere hydration and comfort, providing comprehensive repair and protection throughout all layers of the skin.

However, at the heart of our company's growth, development, and success lies our simple advice of *listening to your skin*. That is exactly what led us to where we are today, by listening to what the skin of our clients were asking. If you are unaware of your skin's needs, how can you nurture its well-being and beauty?

The condition and appearance of our skin is key to our



well-being and health. If we want to flaunt healthy skin for many years it is essential to take care of it daily with the right active ingredients and products.

DMA: Your patients and your associates have often spoken about your sense of responsibility towards them. Why has this been a driving force for you and Sesderma?

Dr. G S: My greatest sense of responsibility lies with people, encompassing both individuals seeking skincare solutions to enhance their skin health and those who work within our company. Our company's success is deeply rooted in its values of humanity, generosity, and expertise. While Sesderma's dermatological innovation is based on continuous acquisition of knowledge and research, it is actually the human element and generosity that truly defines our brand.

I am not only committed to the business, for me it goes beyond merely selling products. I am dedicated to providing dermatology solutions that address various skin disorders, such as vitiligo, psoriasis, dermatitis, and many others. Helping patients overcome their skin problems and watching their quality of life change, brings me immense joy. This is what I find most fulfilling.

DMA: Your father was known for his philanthropic personality too, how did he inspire you?

Dr. G S: I had seen this trait in my father all through my childhood. He was a vocational doctor who traveled on foot or on horseback through the fields and roads of Barranquilla to care for the sick, many of whom paid him with a huacal of fresh eggs or a pair of mangoes. When you observe it all your life, it becomes part of your DNA.

One day more than 15-20 years ago, at an uncertain point of the road that crosses the immense swamp between Barranquilla and Santa Marta in Colombia, we stopped to eat a couple of *arepas with egg* and a *chinola juice* at a street stall. As we were enjoying the delicious flavors and drinking a *café largo*, a little girl, so poorly dressed, with no footwear on caught my attention. On conversing with her, I realized how impoverished she was, at this moment I decided to pay for her education and family expenses so she could have better opportunities in life.

I feel privileged for the blessings that life has given me: a wonderful family that offered me the opportunities to develop as a person and to be able to study in Spain. I had wonderful parents who instilled in me a sense of responsibility to do my best in life, qualities that have defined me over the years. I have tried to teach my children because I think what is most important is that they are good people, responsible, generous, and supportive. As I have had a long career of personal, professional, and business success, I believe that I have a moral duty to return a part of what I accomplished to people who have not been as lucky or have the same opportunities as I did. I feel this

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repayment as an obligation towards society, so that the less fortunate will have new opportunities.

DMA: Dr Serrano, we know that one of the first solidarity initiatives was the Bali Foundation

Dr. G S: Yes, this is an action I launched more than 10 years ago following a visit to Bali, Indonesia. Our guide, Budi, was a very spiritual and extraordinarily generous person who helped a community of very poor people living in the jungle. Budi introduced me to a family whose members were all blind and therefore depended absolutely on the charity of others. After this meeting we built them a small house, and offered them to work in the assembly of the needles for our NANOPORE, so they ceased to depend on the charity of others and went on to have a paid job with which they could earn a living and send their children to school. My greatest satisfaction is to see



how their lives changed and how they had a real chance of getting out of poverty.

DMA: Your latest solidarity initiative is the Gabriel Serrano Foundation Dominican Republic. What are its purposes?

Dr. G S: Indeed, the Dominican Republic is a place I hold dear to my heart. I am in love with this land and its people since I first arrived here almost forty years ago. I return on a regular basis, and have dared to make a handful of great friends that I consider as family and have launched a series of business initiatives that I hope will bring wealth and well-being to many people.

The Dr. Gabriel Serrano Foundation Dominican Republic is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to help the needy, to provide education for children and young people and to improve the living conditions and health of families with a lack of resources.

I can happily say that my enthusiasm has infected dozens of prominent Dominicans from all backgrounds who are part of the board of this foundation. They are also Board of Directors of the Fight against Leprosy and the Dominican Institute of Dermatology Dr. Huberto Bogaert has joined me unconditionally to collaborate in this noble purpose of helping disadvantaged children, offering them opportunities for educational and personal development. Eventually, it is love for Dominicans that summarizes the momentum of this project.

DMA: You have created a beautiful balance of work and life, and giving back to society, that is so inspirational.

Dr. G S: The truth is that, as I say in my biography 'The Story of My Life', *“For me, as for my ancestors and descendants, medicine is the most noble and beautiful profession in the world, not only because it allows us to cure, but also because it consists of serving and helping other people”.*

That is what matters most to me, and I am blessed to have a family that aligns with my values.

DMA: And finally, is skin health about skin care alone?

Dr. G S: Your skin will tell the story of your life. You must learn to nurture it, listen to it and follow your heart. ■

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