

# **Tattoo Ink Integrity** ***Quality, Compliance, and Safety*** ***“Tattoo Aftercare Products”***



**129<sup>th</sup> AFDO Annual Educational Conference,  
Dallas, 2025**

**Eddie Kolos | Dr. Rajiv Saini**

**CEO**

**CSO**



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Graduated from Harvard Medical School

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Clinical Ops Expert

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Research Focus- Oral Systemic Health

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Research Impact-170+ Research Publications

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Published Author: 05 Books

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Scientific Background with Industry Leadership

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Top 2% in World of Science- Stanford University

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Dr. Rajiv Saini



# Presentation Overview

Overview of  
Tattoo Aftercare  
Industry

Healing Dynamics  
and Formulation  
Choices

Compliance,  
Safety, &  
Regulation

Strategies for  
Stakeholders

Discussion  
Questions  
Feedback





## Overview of Tattoo Aftercare Industry

# How Big is the Tattoo Industry?

\$4.5B+

25K+

3 in 10  
Adults



# Changing Face of Tattoo Industry

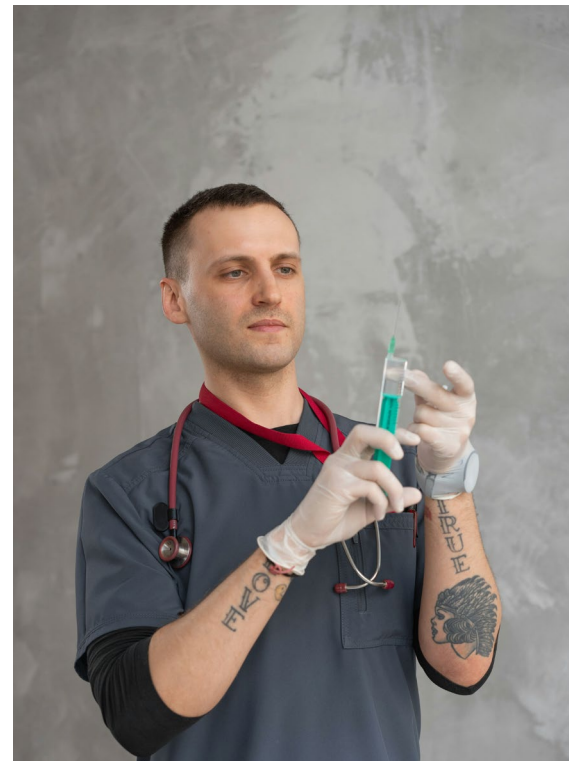
## TATTOO AFTERCARE PRODUCTS



**STIGMA**



**ARTWORK**



**MAINSTREAM**



**CANCER CARE**

A large orange circle on the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge.

## **TATTOO AFTERCARE PRODUCTS**

### **Intersection of Regulations**

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Art to Public Health

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Product Safety

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FDA Compliance

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Consumer Protection

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Ingredients Quality

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Environment Safety

## Why this Topic Matters to AFDO?

**Tattooed Skin:** Altered Skin + Immune Response

**Tattoo Regulations:** Equipment Sterilization  
Ink Safety  
Artist Licensing

**What about Tattoo Aftercare Products?**



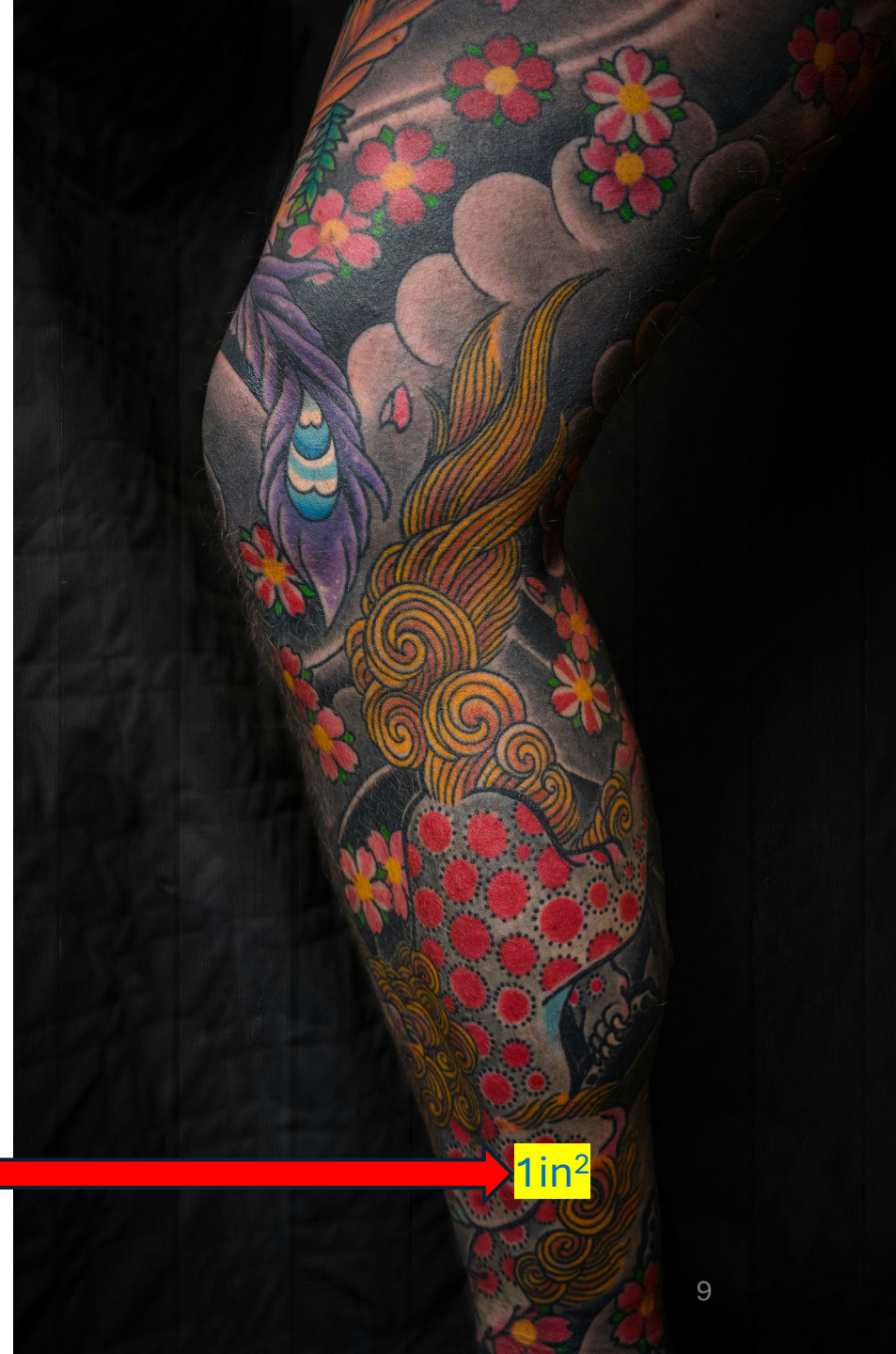


# Skin Dynamics

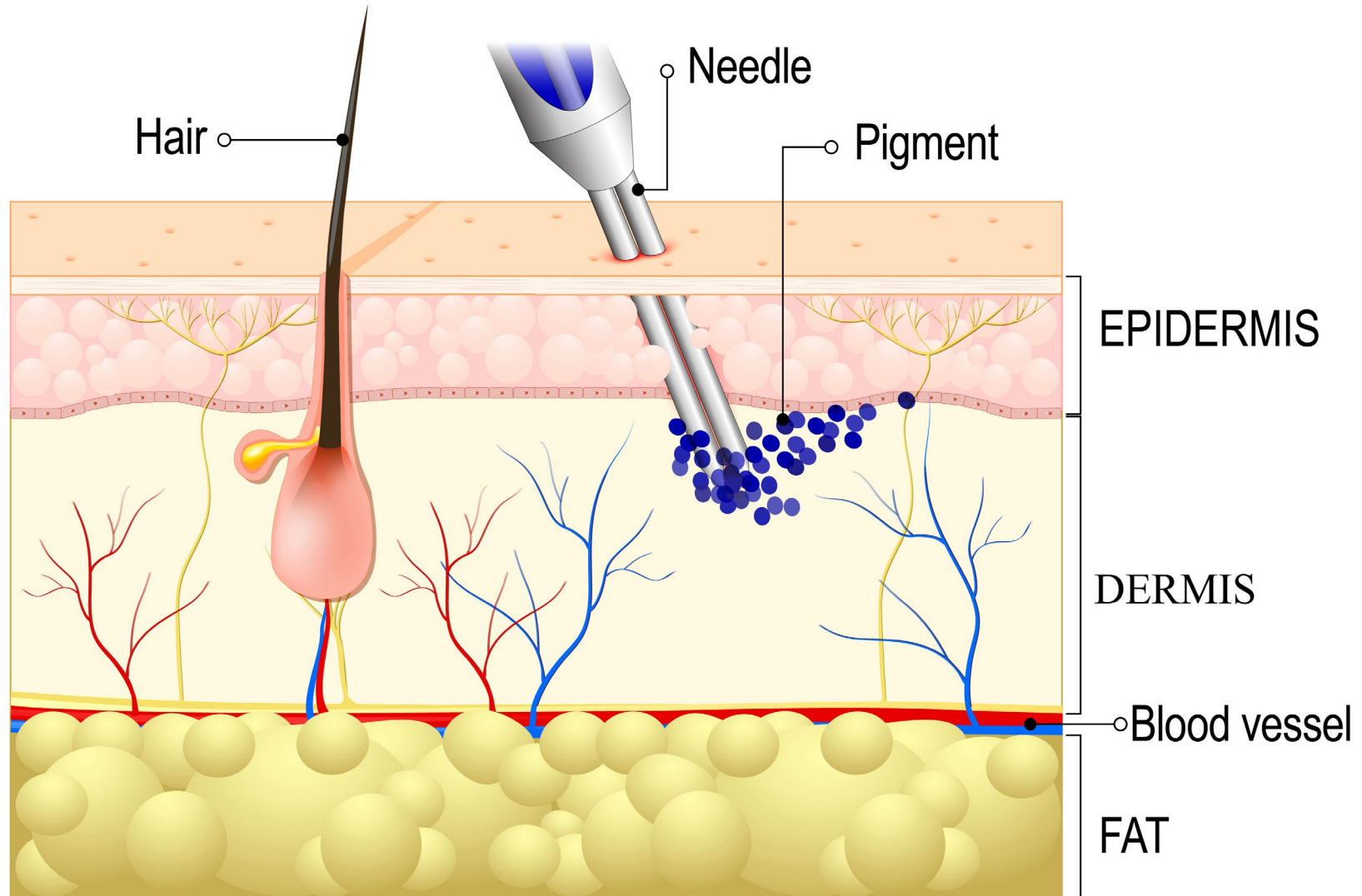


**19M Skin Cells | 300 Sweat Glands**  
**20 Blood Vessels | 1000 Nerve Endings**

**1in<sup>2</sup>**



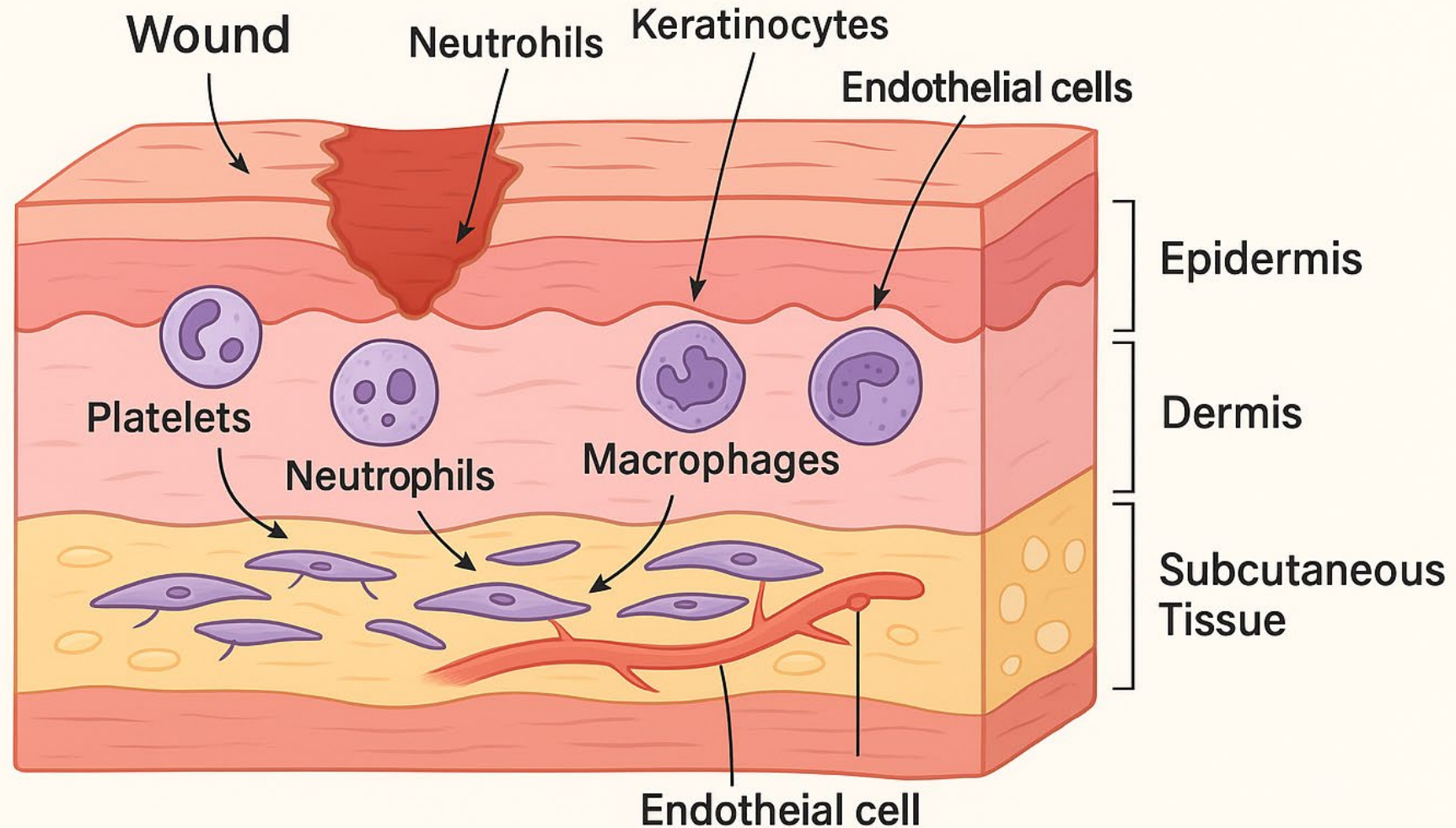
# Tattooing: A Controlled Skin Puncture



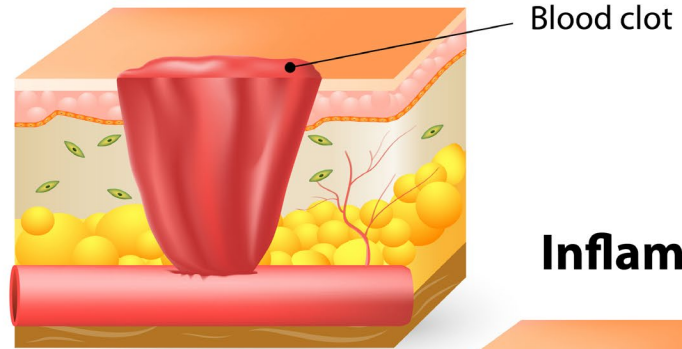


# Skin Healing Process

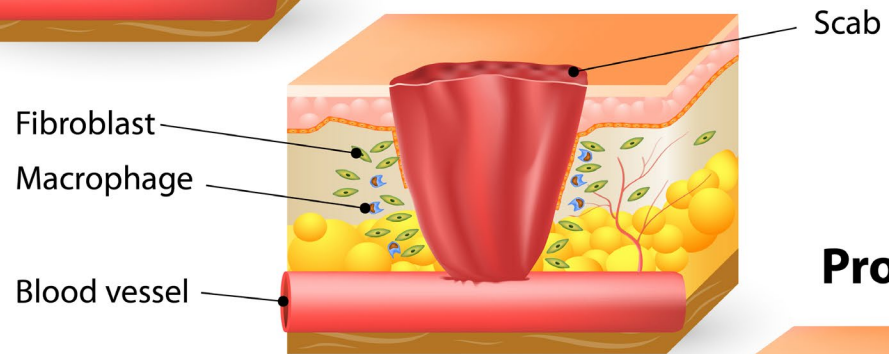
Inflammation → Proliferation → Maturation



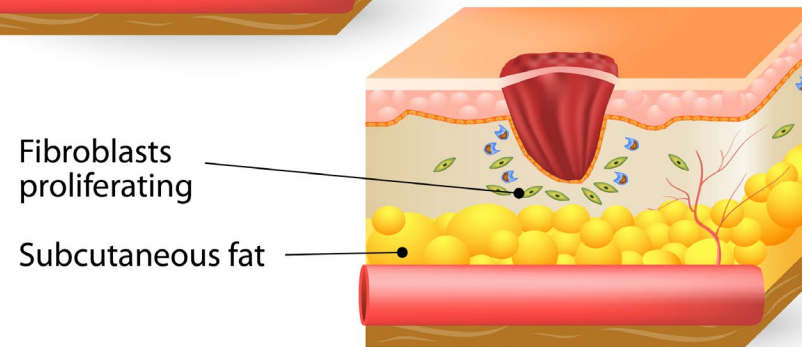
## Bleeding



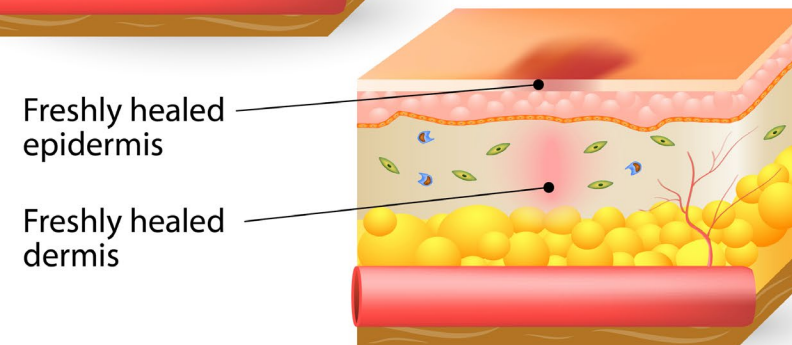
## Inflammatory



## Proliferative



## Remodeling







What Makes Tattoo Aftercare Products Go Wrong?

# **Tattoo-Associated Skin Reaction: The Importance of an Early Diagnosis and Proper Treatment**

**Andrea Bassi,<sup>1</sup> Piero Campolmi,<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Cannarozzo,<sup>1</sup> Rossana Conti,<sup>1</sup>  
Nicola Bruscino,<sup>1</sup> Massimo Gola,<sup>1</sup> Stefano Ermini,<sup>2</sup> Daniela Massi,<sup>3</sup> and Silvia Moretti<sup>1</sup>**

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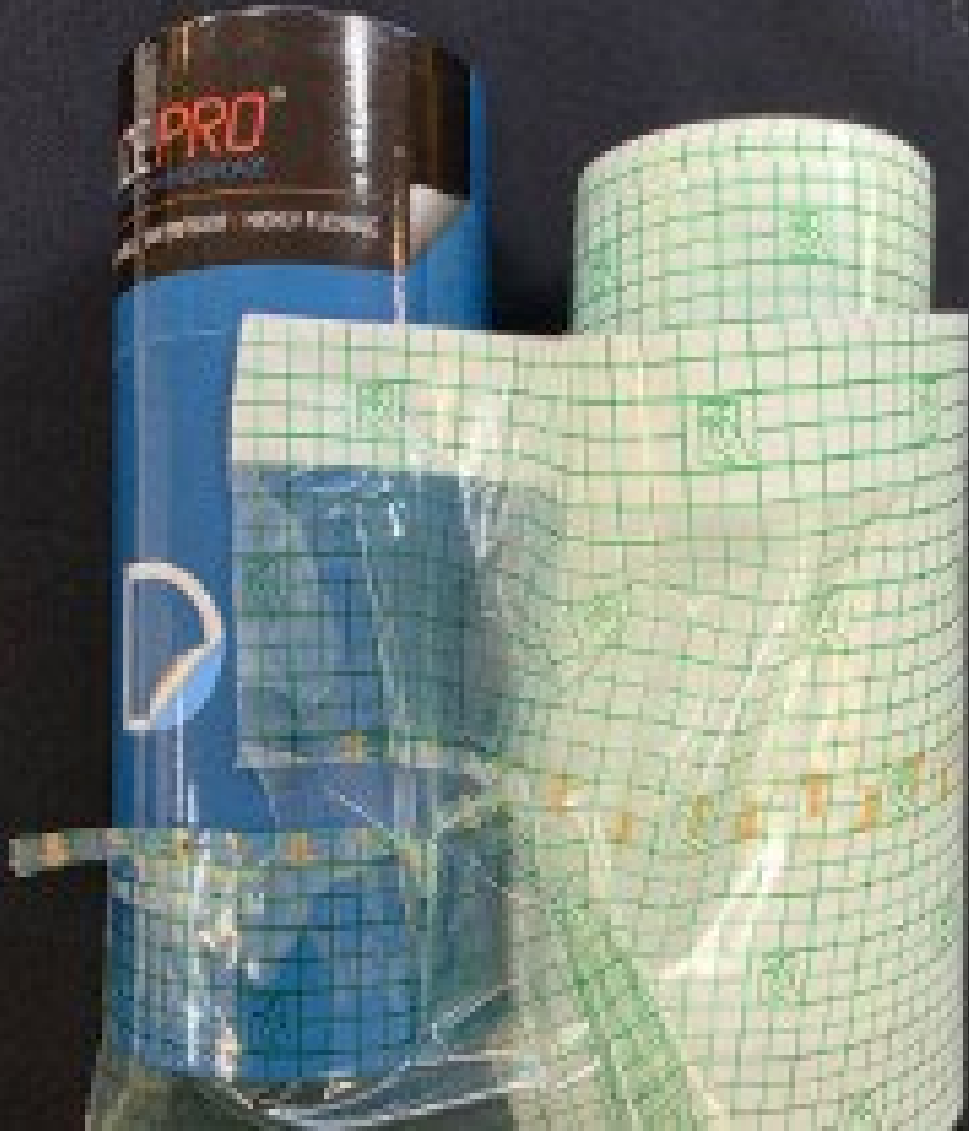
Correspondence should be addressed to Andrea Bassi; [bassi76@interfree.it](mailto:bassi76@interfree.it)

Received 26 February 2014; Revised 21 June 2014; Accepted 9 July 2014; Published 23 July 2014

Academic Editor: Michael S. Kaminer

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# MADE IN CHINA



## Plastic Wraps

- Seal the wound
- Trap heat and moisture
- Create an anaerobic environment
- Prevent oxygenation



## Thick Balms

- Cross Contamination
- Sticky, not preserved
- Trap dirt and bacteria in the pores
- Made with synthetic ingredients and some seed oils



## Article

# Characterization of Tattoo Aftercare Products: Allergenic Ingredients and Marketing Claims

September 2020 · *Dermatitis* Publish Ahead of Print(5)DOI: [10.1097/DER.0000000000000635](https://doi.org/10.1097/DER.0000000000000635)

## Authors:

**Yujie Linda Liou**  
University Hospitals**Walter Liszewski**  
Northwestern University**Jamie P. Schlarbaum****Erin M. Warshaw**[Download citation](#)[Copy link](#)[Request full-text PDF](#)

To read the full-text of this research, you can request a copy directly from the authors.

[Citations \(6\)](#)[References \(33\)](#)

## Abstract

**Background:** Common recommendations for tattoo aftercare to ensure proper healing include application of topical products. Little is known about tattoo aftercare products. **Methods:** Tattoo aftercare products were identified from a previous study and a search on Amazon.com using the phrase "tattoo aftercare." Duplicates and products without complete ingredient lists were excluded. Marketing claims were tabulated. All ingredients were entered in Excel and grouped according to Contact Allergen Management Program categories. Comparison of ingredients to North American Contact Dermatitis Group (NACDG) screening and American Contact Dermatitis Society (ACDS) Core allergens was conducted. **Results:** A total of 84 tattoo aftercare products from 52 distinct brands were found. Forty-eight distinctive market claims were identified; the use of "natural ingredient(s)" (42.9%) was most common. There were 4 to 28 ingredients per product (mean =  $11.8 \pm 5.5$ ) with a total of 369 distinct ingredients listed. Products contained an average of  $7.9 \pm 3.9$  ACDS Core allergens per product and  $7.0 \pm 3.7$  NACDG allergens per product. Most common allergens included fragrance/botanicals ( $n = 529$ ), vitamin E derivatives ( $n = 43$ ), and vitamin B5 derivatives ( $n = 11$ ). **Conclusions:** This review of 84 products found that tattoo aftercare products contain an average of 8 ACDS Core and 7 NACDG allergens. Clinicians should be aware of potential allergens in tattoo aftercare products.

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## Fragrances & Dyes

- Artificial Chemicals
- Delayed Hypersensitivity
- Allergic Contact Dermatitis
- Rash | Itching | Blistering



Published in final edited form as:

*Dermatol Online J.* ; 26(10): .

## **Scented lotions may cause scarring and premature fading of tattoos**

**Adrian Pona, MD<sup>1,2</sup>, Cristian D Gonzalez, MD<sup>1</sup>, Barbara J Walkosz, PhD<sup>3</sup>, Robert P Dellavalle, MD PhD MSPH<sup>1,4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Dermatology, University of Colorado School of Medicine, Aurora, Colorado, USA

<sup>2</sup>Department of Internal Medicine, Vidant Medical Center/East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, USA

<sup>3</sup>Klein Buendel, Inc., Golden, Colorado, USA

<sup>4</sup>US Department of Veterans Affairs Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center Dermatology Service, Aurora, Colorado, USA

### **Abstract**

Although tattoo artists provide tattoo aftercare instructions to their clients, recommendations are often not cost-effective or supported by evidence. A 22-year-old man developed a pruritic red rash over his healing tattoo one week after receiving the tattoo. Although multiple queries were negative, the patient did note use of a scented lotion before the eruption. We determined that allergic contact dermatitis from the scented lotion caused scarring and premature fading of the new tattoo. Tattoo artists should recommend avoidance of scented lotions and instruct clients to care for their new tattoo like a wound in their aftercare instructions.





## **Alcohol Products**

- Short term sterilization
- Cytotoxic
- Slow Re-epithelization
- Increased Peeling

## **Antiseptic Soaps**





## Petroleum Products + Skin

- Seal the Skin
  - Oxygen Tension
  - Mineral Oils
  - Microbial Growth
- 

**Petrolatum**  
**Panthenol**





## Cellular Level

- Denaturing proteins and dissolving lipid membranes.
- Extremely cytotoxic to regenerating cells like keratinocytes and fibroblasts.
- These are the very cells responsible for closing the wound, rebuilding the dermis, and forming a smooth epidermal barrier.
- Alters the skin's mantle layer.



## **Alcohol**

### **Healing Challenges!**

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kills bacteria

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Causes stinging, burning, and irritation.

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Delays re-epithelialization by damaging viable tissue.

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Increases skin dryness, which can lead to excessive peeling or cracking.

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Potentially destabilizes pigment particles, leading to uneven color retention.

## **Allergic Reactions**

### **Post-Tattoo**

Mild to moderate allergic contact dermatitis.

Allergic reactions compromise the pigment.

Ingredient transparency, product claims and labels.



[Home](#) > [Current Dermatology Reports](#) > [Article](#)

# Tattoo-Related Allergic Contact Dermatitis

Contact Dermatitis (B.Adler and V. Deleo, Section editors) | Published: 06 October 2022

Volume 11, pages 202–208, (2022) [Cite this article](#)

Karishma Daftary & Walter Liszewski 

 276 Accesses  3 Citations [Explore all metrics](#) →

## Abstract

### *Purpose of Review*

The purpose of this article is to review the tattooing process and relevant sources of contact allergens to help clinicians manage tattoo-related allergic contact dermatitis (ACD).

### *Recent Findings*

Though tattoo-related ACD has been largely attributed to heavy metal pigments, organic pigments are more commonly used today. Sources of contact allergens may include tattoo pigments, inks, needles, and aftercare products. Allergens in inks may not be present in free form but rather formed from a process of haptization in the dermis or from breakdown products. Because of this, tattoo inks may not elicit positive patch test reactions.

### *Summary*

The tattoo industry undergoes little regulation in the USA, and tattoos are associated with cutaneous adverse reactions, notably ACD. Clinicians should be aware of the allergens present in tattoo materials and the clinical manifestations of tattoo-related ACD.

## **Tattoo Aftercare Products**

**Formulation is the  
Key**

Lowest effective concentration

Avoid known irritants (like mango extracts)

Avoid allergens (like synthetic menthols)

Avoid “cosmetic fluff” (like essential oils)

Aftercare products are not beauty products!

## Lidocaine (Regulated Use)

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- 4% Permissible Dose Limit
- Formulation with Safety
- Stress Free Sessions
- Responsible Usage





# **Tattoo Aftercare Products: Key Challenges**

**Over Drying**

**Under  
Hydration**

**Microbes**

**Trapped  
Irritants**

**pH Imbalance**

**Cross  
Contamination**





# **TATTOO AFTERCARE PRODUCTS**

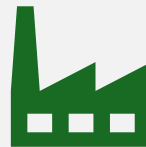
## **The Minimalist Formula Avoid Chemicals Ingredients**

- New Variable
- New Potential for Allergic Reaction
- Microbial Instability
- Compromised Skin Compatibility

## **Tattoo Aftercare Responsible Business**



Registered with MoCRA



Manufacturing Responsibility





## Sea Salt in Tattoo Aftercare Products

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Mineral	Healing Function	Tattoo Relevance
<b>Zinc</b>	Immune response, reduces inflammation, supports wound closure	Helps prevent infection and speeds up scab formation
<b>Magnesium</b>	Promotes collagen formation and skin hydration	Aids in reducing redness and improving skin texture
<b>Calcium</b>	Supports skin barrier repair, helps in cell regeneration	Restores skin structure after tattoo trauma
<b>Potassium</b>	Maintains skin moisture and regulates fluid balance	Prevents excessive dryness and irritation post-tattoo
<b>Sodium</b>	Balances hydration and helps transport nutrients into skin cells	Keeps tattooed skin hydrated without clogging
<b>Copper</b>	Stimulates blood vessel formation (angiogenesis) and collagen synthesis	Speeds nutrient delivery to healing tattooed areas
<b>Manganese</b>	Assists in antioxidant activity and skin repair enzymes	Promotes faster skin renewal and supports pigment stability
<b>Iron</b>	Enhances oxygen delivery through blood circulation	Energizes healing cells, reducing fatigue in healing tissue
<b>Iodine</b>	Natural antimicrobial, supports immune defense	Protects tattooed skin from bacterial infection

<b>PROPERTIES</b>	<b>Red Sea Salt</b>	<b>Sodium Chloride (Table Salt)</b>
<b>Natural Minerals and Elements</b>	<b>80+</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>Evaporation + Sun Dried</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Organically Harvested</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Aligns with Human Saline System</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Chemically Refined &amp; Processed</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Heated to Extreme Temperatures</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Produced Commercially</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Environmental Impact</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>





## **Tattoo Aftercare Products**

## **Divided Market**

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Variations in Tattoo Aftercare  
Instructions

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Diversity of Tattoo Aftercare Products

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Understanding Hygiene Protocols

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Hand Hygiene

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Understanding Skin

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**Gold Standard in  
Tattoo Aftercare  
Industry**

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Industry's First

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Premium Natural Ingredients

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No Dyes & Fragrances

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Professional Feedback

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First Pro-Team Ever Developed



**Gold Standard in  
Tattoo Aftercare  
Industry**

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Sustainable Packaging (Bag-in-Can)

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First Foam Soap Antibacterial (BZK not Alcohol)

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Quality Control | GMP | UL Audited  
(Third Party)

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All Made in the USA

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Extended Shelf Life: Real-Time Studies  
(Stability)





## **Role of Tattoo Artist**

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Documentation

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Release Form for any liabilities

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General Liability Insurance

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State and Health Licensing

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Safety and CE

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Blood borne Pathogens Certification

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Mandatory Aftercare Instructions

# **Education & Awareness**



**Studio Toolkits**



**QR coded Handouts**



**Regulator Industry Collaboration**



**Consumer Facing Campaigns**

# Moving Forward





# Thank you

*Right tattoo aftercare products ensure a safe healing process!*



**Eddie Kolos:** [Eddie@h2ocean.com](mailto:Eddie@h2ocean.com) **Dr. Rajiv Saini:** [Rajiv@h2ocean.com](mailto:Rajiv@h2ocean.com)