OPERATING A COSMETIC CLINIC*

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Not long ago a manufacturer asked me if I knew of anyone who would make some use tests of his face powder on a large number of women. I talked to a consulting chemist about it, and this was his response, "It isn't necessary to test it on women. That is messy and expensive, and you come out with a lot of conflicting statements and no definite information. The thing to do is work with it in the laboratory, try it on different textures under different conditions, and you get results that mean something."

Now I have the greatest respect for laboratory procedures, but I consider this point of view completely unrealistic I believe that every cosmetic should have the benefit of all the laboratory tests you can give it but this, to my mind, is only laying the groundwork. You still must find out how that cosmetic works on living human tissue, and how it meets the tastes, habits, and prejudices of the average woman. The simplest way to get this final answer, is to try it out in a miniature world—a cosmetic clinic.

Some of you have visited the Good Housekeeping Beauty Clinic and you know that the set-up is very simple. It consists of a make-up table where six women at a time may apply creams and make-up, a manicure table, a basin for shampooing, a chair used for both shampoos and facials, a small kitchen, and space where groups may be assembled.

Our own employees form an excellent testing group because they vary in age from 16 to well past 60, and include many types. We keep a card file that tells what type of skin and hair they have, their coloring, and so on, so we can always find ten women with dry skin or three with bleached hair. They enjoy working with us, partly because it is a change from their usual routine, partly because they like to get a free lipstick or shampoo, and partly because, being women, they are naturally interested in cosmetics. We keep the atmosphere friendly and informal and help them with their personal problems as much as we can without encroaching on the time necessary for our main job of testing.

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Two trained beauty operators conduct our experiments. I am often asked how we find these girls who must be somewhat above the rank and file in intelligence. The best way, I've found, is to advertise for an experienced beauty operator, trained in all branches, to do cosmetic research. I mention the hours—9 to 5 through a five-day week. During the war applicants were scarce, but I kept the ad running until I got the girl I wanted. I sort out applicants by personal interview and by work tests. I prefer girls who have moved around a bit, preferably with some experience in other states. They have fewer prejudices to root out; they are not wedded to one line or one way of doing things. I look for the skeptical, observant, experimental type. I avoid the born saleswoman. She won't be objective enough for us. Taking skill and conscientious performance for granted, this quality of objectivity is the most important one to look for.

The work of beauty operators, of course, is supervised. Some one who has a clear idea of the problem and the questions to be answered must plan the tests and judge the results.

I know of one manufacturer who engaged a hairdresser to test his shampoos, but neglected to set up a definite procedure to be followed. The hairdresser, naturally enough, at first did just what he would do for a beauty shop customer—used wave set, brilliantine, and hair lacquer and in other ways so confused the results that they were completely worthless.

In our work we have three fundamental questions to answer. Is this cosmetic good for the purpose for which it is designed? Are the directions for its use accurate and clear? Are the claims made for it true?

In planning tests we follow the line of common sense, keeping constantly in mind how the average woman will use it and what she will expect from it. People sometimes ask me, "How do you measure the shine of a girl's hair?" We measure it as a consumer would—by eyesight. If the difference in the gloss given by two products is so slight it can't be seen by the naked eye, it won't matter to a consumer and it doesn't matter to us.

Here's another example of this common-sense approach. Recently we were asked to study two formulas for improving a soap shampoo—both supposedly designed to work well in hard water. In the laboratory both shampoos gave heavy precipitation, but a practical use test showed a decisive difference. We washed half the hair of our subject with one formula, and half with the other. Then we checked the result, as a woman would, by noting the gloss on each side and by brushing. We brushed each side with a clean, black-bristled brush sixty times. One brush was coated with a heavy white film. The other still looked black and clean, showing that the formula used on that side rinsed out well in hard water and left no objectionable scum. That

side, of course, was obviously more lustrous.

In planning tests, whenever practicable, we arrange for some kind of control. It sharpens observation and brings out points that might otherwise be missed. In many cases—nail polish, for example—the control may be a similar cosmetic with which we are thoroughly familiar. In checking a hand cream, we may use an untreated hand as a control for a treated one. In the case of an emollient face cream, we may take careful observations of the skins of a group of testers, and after two weeks' daily use of the cream, examine the skins again. To make certain that judgment is accurate and unbiased, the final examination is often made by two persons—the one who supervised the study, and some one who has not seen the notes taken of the skin condition before the cream was applied.

This examination by a neutral party helps us to resolve some difficult questions. Some time ago, the laboratory, in reporting on a cream shampoo, commented that the label included the claim, "Contains lanolin." The amount it contained was very small. We were doubtful that such a small amount of lanolin was significant enough to warrant its mention as an active ingredient on the label. We decided the point by practical test. The manufacturer made up some of the product without lanolin. We shampooed six subjects, using the shampoo without lanolin on one side and with lanolin on the other. Then a woman who did not know what had been done was asked to tell which side of the hair was softer and smoother. She ran her hands over each head, and, to our surprise, in all six cases picked out the side washed with the product containing lanolin.

In another instance, we wanted to know whether a hand lotion used before washing dishes really protected the hands and helped to keep them soft. We co-ordinated our study with a dishwashing study the Institute was making, in which a number of girls washed specially soiled dishes twice a day for five days. Before each one tackled the dishes, we rubbed one hand with lotion, taking care always to treat the same hand. At the end of the test, two men—engineers in the Institute—were asked to tell which hands were softer. As you might expect, these men made interested and excellent judges. Their observations agreed with those of the test supervisor, and we had eliminated any possibility of bias, again proving the usefulness of a neutral party.

A question that arises immediately in planning a test is, "How many subjects do we need?" That depends entirely on the type of product and what we are trying to find out. If the product is new, as cake make-up was a few years ago, more testers are necessary than if the product is a familiar one. If the ingredients are new and untried, as soapless shampoos were some years ago, many more testers

and much more time is called for. A good deal depends on whether clear-cut evidence can be expected, or whether it is likely to be conflicting.

Trying out a bubble bath is a simple matter. The consumer expects it to have a pleasant smell, to make plenty of bubbles that last long enough for her to relax and enjoy them, and to leave no ring on the tub. We can judge the quantity and lasting quality of the bubbles very quickly in a laundry tub, a half a dozen women will give us a good idea of how satisfactory the product will be under varying conditions in the home.

But if you want to know whether a face powder cakes and how well it clings, you may need 20 or more subjects because you are bound to have some contradictory results.

In general, when we have a complicated problem, I have found that it is better to begin with a very small number of subjects, and enlarge the study after we have had some experience with a product.

The time required for an adequate use test is sometimes surprising to those who are not accustomed to this method of investigation. It may vary from a few days to a year or more. Consider, for example, a product with this claim, "Eliminates broken, brittle nails; helps nails grow long and strong." This problem was brought to us last spring. The plan for our test required 20 women to come to the Beauty Clinic twice a day to have their nails treated. Since we have a five-day week, they were given a supply of the product to use themselves on Saturday and Sunday. To determine how long the study should continue, we figured that it would take two months for the old nail to grow out completely and two months more for a new nail to grow out to the tip. So the minimum time was set at four months. I am sorry to report that at the end of this tedious study, we saw no difference in the quality of the nails.

As I have explained, most of our practical use tests are supervised in the Beauty Clinic. Sometimes, however, we find it advisable to have groups of women make home tests. For example, in studying a plastic cuticle pusher, we thought the tip might be too sharp and injure the cuticle when used by unskilled hands. A group of 20 women who used the pusher for a month decided this question for us. We also like to have large groups of home testers use products to determine whether directions for using are clear and adequate, or to learn whether they will follow directions contrary to their usual habits.

These practical use tests have been of enormous value to us when we want to know whether a cosmetic works and will satisfy the average user. They have enabled us to recommend confidently a large group of excellent cosmetics. At the same time, guided by them, we have rejected such disappointing items as a bubble bath that doesn't bubble, a cake make-up so hard it won't come off the cake, or one that

streaks badly, or a cream shampoo that disintegrates when wet fingers dip into it. They have added greatly to our knowledge both of cosmetics and the habits of users. I believe that you, as cosmetic chemists would find such a clinic equally useful. It may be, as the consulting chemist whom I quoted at the beginning of this paper said, messy and expensive—but not nearly so messy and expensive as having an unsatisfactory product come back on your hands.