

# Russia's tragic abortion trade fuels West's cosmetic industry

VAST numbers of abortions in Russia are fueling the cosmetics industry in the West, with tons of placenta being used to make expensive face creams that are claimed to erase wrinkles.

In a bizarre and tragic trade, lorry-loads of refrigerated placenta are being exported to France, where some are sold to cosmetic firms to make the fashionable face creams. These beauty aids are sold in London at some of the most expensive shops, where the fact that they contain placenta is buried in the small print.

No mention is made that the placenta comes from women,

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by Marie Colvin, Paris, and  
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rather than animals, or from Russia where the abortion rate is one of the highest in the world. The firms using the material in creams include Roc, a chic subsidiary of Louis Vuitton-Moët Hennessey group.

The firms defend the use of human placenta on the grounds that it is rich in nutrients that moisturize and "regenerate" skin. "We were searching for

an action [rejuvenating the skin] and that action, according to our tests, is accomplished by the use of placenta," said a pharmacologist at Roc's headquarters in Paris.

But the presence of human placenta in face creams came as an unpleasant surprise among prominent arbiters of British fashion. "It just sounds so outrageous a suggestion,"

said Marcelle d'Argy Smith, editor of Cosmopolitan magazine, who uses Roc products.

"It sounds like something the political parties would throw at each other. If it's true, then good God, it's appalling . . . It's like finding out the Queen has been stealing."

Debbie Moore, a former model and the founder of Pineapple, the dance studio and clothing company, found the trade "quite shocking". "The implications are terrible," she said. "It's not a necessary ingredient if it's used purely for regenerative purposes because a vegetable DNA is now available."

## Abortion trade feeds vanity

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The placenta used in cosmetics is sold by the Institut Merieux in Lyon, France, which buys an average 19 tons a day from various countries. About one ton a day comes from the St. Petersburg region.

Michel Galy, director of biotechnical operations at Merieux, said all the placenta is processed together, most of it into serums and vaccines to combat disease.

But tons of placenta - the institute declined to give figures - are sold on to other laboratories.

These laboratories process it into a soluble extract called hydrolysate of placenta, which is tested for viral and bacterial contamination. This is then sold to cosmetic firms.

Galy said: "We sell to intermediaries and do not have any responsibility for what they do with it."

In St. Petersburg, Alexander Satchkov, a doctor at Hospital 19, a factory-sized abortion clinic that last year sold placenta from 34,440 aborted

fetuses to Institut Merieux, added: "We do not completely object to its use in cosmetics."

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"But medical blood products are simply more important. We would like to have the facilities to process the placenta here, then we could ensure the material was used for medical purposes."

Russia receives Fr12.5 (£1.28) for each kilogram of placenta. Therefore, hospitals are anxious to collect as much placenta as possible to earn hard currency desperately needed to purchase Western medical equipment, drugs and medicines.

In Hospital 19, dozens of women can be seen queuing in drab corridors each morning for abortions.

Roc said its three products containing placenta - Skin Energizing Concentrate, Night Revitalizing Cream and Eye Contour Treatment Gel - were "very popular" in Britain.

They are also very expensive; a 40 ml bottle of the skin energizer costs £ 17.35 at Harrods.

Other brand containing placenta from Institut Merieux include Sicobel's Placentor range, made in Miribol, France, and Rilastil's "anti-wrinkle" range, manufactured by Ganassini Laboratories in Milan.

Sicobel sells 58,000 tubes of these products annually in France alone; Rilastil sells 100,000 in France, where a 50 ml tube of Creme Visage Nuit goes for Fr140 (£14.40).

The cream, according to the advertising blurb, gives skin a "softer, smoother look", allowing the wearer to age "serenely and in total beauty".

*Additional reporting by Grace*



Moore: shocked by use of placenta