

The Land of Oz

Oz Garcia's new Longevity Lounge reenvisioned what a doctor's office should look like.

PHOTO BY ROBERT WRIGHT

Leave it to Oz Garcia, the oft-quoted nutritional guru, to envision what a 21st-century doctor's office should look like. Although the idea of one-stop shopping health care isn't new—a massage after a checkup isn't unheard of in many a modern doctor's office—Garcia's concept, with an updated roster of doctors specializing in everything from balancing hormones to eliminating cellulite, could signal the future of well-being.

Garcia has been champing at the bit to open the boldly named Longevity Lounge and launch an attack on aging. "This has been a part of what I always envisioned for our company," he says by cell phone from Greece, where he's loving the healthy cuisine. ("You lose weight here without even trying!" he gushes.) "Fortunately, I found several people who lined up with my vision, which was to assemble high-quality professionals in a nonclinical environment."

Not content with your basic mix of health and beauty experts, Garcia reached out to doctors he's admired and whose areas of expertise complemented his own practice: osteopath Lionel Bissoon, hormone specialist Erika Schwartz and skin specialist Tabasum Mir. Starting this month, all four will be working out of Garcia's newly expanded space on Central Park West. Both Bissoon, who wrote the foreword to Garcia's 1998 book, *The Balance*, and Schwartz are longtime friends of Garcia's. Mir is a recent discovery.

Bissoon specializes in mesotherapy, which treats cellulite, hair loss and other conditions with injections of everything from homeopathic medications and vitamins to hormone blockers in order to stimulate the mesoderm, the

skin's middle layer. The technique is somewhat controversial, in large part because it's still new here. "I was the fourth physician in the U.S. to be trained in the technique, and today there are only 20," Bissoon says. (By comparison, in France, where mesotherapy originated 50 years ago, an estimated 60,000 people undergo the treatment every year.) Bissoon is eager to prove mesotherapy's value in combating a whole range of complaints. "Everyone talks about mesotherapy and cellulite," he says, "but there are so many other conditions that it can treat, such as wrinkles and scars." Garcia, a longtime fan of Bissoon's, has become an even bigger one since seeing how excited his patients—many of them celebrities—are after the treatments.

Since a significant part of Garcia's own work involves analyzing hormonal makeup, it's not surprising that he recruited Schwartz, author of the best-seller *The Hormone Solution*. Like Bissoon's, Schwartz's line of work—diagnosing and remedying hormone imbalances—is cutting-edge. "The human body is so complex, and no one thing will keep it young forever," says Schwartz, who is splitting her time between her private practice in Westchester and the Longevity Lounge. "Oz puts together the big picture, but there might still be an open space. That's where I come in." To address a litany of problems, including depression, migraines and severe PMS, she uses a combination, in cream form, of plant-based hormones derived from soy and yams. It's available only by prescription at specialized pharmacies.

Trained as an ophthalmologist, Mir has since pursued skin care and is passionate about her goals: "I want to get you back the skin that you had when you were five years old," she says. Although she

"Fortunately, I found several people who lined up with my vision," says Oz Garcia of his new venture.



The dream team at Longevity Lounge. From left: Oz Garcia, Tabasum Mir, Erika Schwartz and Lionel Bissoon.

administers her fair share of wrinkle-busting Botox and collagen injections, she prefers educating her patients about which skin care products truly work. In addition to her own skin care line, MirSkin, she is a strong proponent of customized peels, in which she often incorporates skin-smoothing vitamins C and A, as well as glycolic acid. Also trained in mesotherapy, she'll join Bissoon in administering treatments at the center, making the duo the only two New York-based practitioners of the technique.

Up next for Garcia is a Longevity Lounge outpost in Beverly Hills, where he, Bissoon, and Mir will commute for consultations. In January he'll reissue his latest book in a revised and expanded edition, with a new title: *Oz Garcia's Look and Feel Fabulous Forever*. And he's recently introduced supplements of all the nutrients he deems necessary for optimum health, such as antioxidants and essential fatty acids.

Garcia points out that the field of nutrition is constantly evolving; fortunately, the flurry of activity required to keep up suits him just fine. "I'm 51 now, and my generation is not a retirement generation," he says. "I'm certainly not looking to retire at 65." Of course not. But, then, Greece awaits.

—PATRICIA REYNOSO