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A skincare book that doesn't tell readers what to buy

Cardiff biochemist Geraint Thomas turns skin barrier science into a framework for understanding why routines can stop working.

CARDIFF, UK, 22 OCTOBER 2026 — Skincare has built an extensive vocabulary around surface states: dry, oily, sensitive, combination, damaged, dehydrated. A new book from biochemist Geraint Thomas starts with the biology beneath those labels and asks why several of them can appear at the same time.

The *Damaged Skin Barrier: A Biochemist's Guide to Barrier Biology, Damage and Repair* is a mechanism-first guide to how the skin barrier is built, regulated, pressured and repaired. Published by Lucidum Press, the book follows one framework across eleven chapters: **structure, regulation and pressure**.

It examines how the stratum corneum is assembled, how acidity and enzyme activity regulate it, how the microbiome responds to conditions at the skin surface, how repeated skincare inputs create biochemical load and why feeling better can arrive before structural recovery is complete.

There are no product rankings or ten-step routines. Instead, the book asks what an intervention requires from the barrier, what state that barrier is already in and whether the skin has the capacity to respond.

Thomas says:

"Products are easy to sell. Mechanisms are harder. I chose mechanisms."

The project began much closer to home. Thomas spent nearly two years making his own skincare routine "absurdly complex" while his skin became increasingly difficult to interpret. Products that had once been unremarkable began to sting. Tightness, oiliness and breakouts were treated as separate problems, and each new symptom invited another intervention.

A retinoid "purge" was the point where that explanation stopped making sense. Six months in, Thomas stopped adding products and started reading primary papers.

"The question changed from 'what should I add?' to 'what is this system responding to?' That change in question eventually became the backbone of the book."

The resulting book draws on primary literature across dermatology, cell biology, biochemistry and biophysics. Topics range from ceramide organisation, filaggrin and epidermal calcium signalling to the acid mantle, microbiome ecology, hard water, environmental stress, systemic regulation and emerging therapies.

Hard water receives particular attention from Thomas. Consumers routinely scrutinise cleanser ingredients while paying far less attention to the chemistry used to rinse them away. Calcium and magnesium can alter surfactant behaviour and deposition at the skin surface, yet tap-water chemistry remains peripheral in consumer skincare discussion.

Thomas suggests one reason may be pretty ordinary: **water is not a product, and products are where most of the attention goes.**

The final chapters apply the same evidential approach to newer interventions including peptides, light-based treatments, microbiome products and extracellular vesicles. A recurring argument is that a biological mechanism can be genuine without proving that a finished consumer product reproduces it.

“Skincare has become very good at naming what the surface looks or feels like. But dry, oily, sensitive and combination do not necessarily tell you why those states are there. The question I became more interested in was: what is the skin responding to?”

The book is independent of product partnerships, affiliate revenue and brand relationships. Claims are grounded in primary literature, with evidence from human studies, tissue models, cultured cells, animal work and mechanistic inference treated according to what each can support.

— E N D S —

NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT THE BOOK

The Damaged Skin Barrier is a biochemist’s guide to skin barrier biology, damage and repair for scientifically curious readers. Across eleven chapters it covers barrier structure, biochemical regulation, microbiome ecology, skincare pressure, recovery, biomimetic support, hard water, environmental stressors, systemic factors and emerging therapies.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

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SUBTITLE	A Biochemist’s Guide to Barrier Biology, Damage and Repair
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ABOUT GERAINT THOMAS

Geraint Thomas holds a first-class integrated Master’s degree in Biochemistry from Cardiff University. His research examined death-receptor signalling, apoptosis resistance and cell-survival pathways in breast cancer stem-like cells. After working outside the field, he returned to scientific writing through skin barrier biology. The Damaged Skin Barrier is his first book. He is the founder of Geraint Thomas Bio and Lucidum Press.

MEDIA

Geraint Thomas is available for interviews and comment. Review copies, selected extracts, high-resolution cover artwork, author images and selected book figures are available on request.

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