

WELLBEING



‘Fix Yourself Up’

Cosmetic doctor Maureen Allem’s booming business offers aesthetic treatments to the young, old and the bold.

Walk into Maureen Allem’s Skin, Body & Health Renewal clinic in upmarket Illovo in Johannesburg, and it feels like setting foot in a furniture showroom catalogue. It’s all pretty pastels, crystal, chandeliers, silver cutlery and dreamy drapes.

Aesthetics – of body and décor – is a consistent theme here. For a customer walking in with hopes of body rejuvenation, the setting does half the job.

Allem materializes in a stunning turquoise kaftan. At age 56, she is perhaps the best advertisement of her booming practice. Her skin is tight, flawless and glowing.

Her non-surgical, integrative/anti-ageing and weight loss company is in its tenth year. Allem has focused on treating ageing with facial and body rejuvenation techniques.

But the outer appearance, she says, is only one side of the story. She recommends the holistic approach incorporating inner health as well.

“The whole new buzzword in medicine is ‘functional’ and personalizing your lifestyle,” she says.

It’s hard to keep up with Allem’s studied descriptions, in breathless sentences, of the underlying causes of most disease and ageing issues.

“Optimize your vitamin D...optimize your liver...70 percent of all disease starts in the gut...”

The South Africa-born Allem was a general practitioner in a provincial hospital for 10 years, followed by a career conducting lifestyle assessments for executives, before she started her own practice in 2000 in her Hyde Park home offering botox and filler treatments.

Her life – and success – didn’t have a linear narrative though. She was in her third year of medicine when she dropped out to get married, becoming “a farmer’s wife” in South Africa’s Free State province.

“I was sewing curtains and playing bridge [on the farm]. Things were not well in the marriage. I realized I made a big mistake and wanted to go back to medicine. I had a two-year-old and a five-month-old [children]. I went to speak to the dean [of my medical institution]. I was 24, and he said, ‘it will be impossible’. I had to find a house in Sandton and adjust to a new life.”

Allem completed her medicine and today, runs 17 renewal clinics across South Africa, including six in Cape Town. She owes it to her team of doctors.

“It’s important to surround yourself with intelligent people; people who are not intimidated by you. Get geniuses around you...and embrace what you love best,” she advises.

And to the women wanting to enhance their looks, she says: “Age is just a number. Fix yourself up.”

– Methil Renuka