

Want to know if your skincare is really working? Meet Mitra Bio

As part of our quick fire questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to Shakiba Kaveh CEO and cofounder of Mitra Bio about molecular markers, a growth mindset and allowing consumers to measure their own biological aging.

Temps de lecture : minute

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I used to work for L'Oreal Research & Innovation in Paris and I was fascinated by the amount of effort and money being spent to better understand the mechanisms of skin aging. This research is not only key for developing cutting-edge products but a useful tool to communicate to consumers which products will work best for their skin, and a product that works ensures customer loyalty!

I met my cofounder Cristiana Banila in 2019. She was working on a non-invasive vaginal swabbing test to replace the invasive pap-smears that women are advised to do every three years for cervical cancer screening. I was fascinated by the power of non-invasive molecular tools to understand the health of a tissue and was quick to ask her if this non-invasive data collection can be performed on skin, as I knew that there was a gap in the market.

Tell me about the business - what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how

you reach customers and so on?

We launched *Mitra Bio* to close the data gap that exists between skincare consumers and the skincare products they use. Currently, when you apply a product on your skin with a hope of skin rejuvenation, there is no way to see if it's actually working other than how it "feels" which is extremely subjective.

At Mitra, we have developed a set of molecular markers from the skin that can quantify how fast skin is aging and whether your lifestyle or skincare interventions are slowing it down. Think of it like a FITBIT for your skin that can monitor your skin age and health.

We have validated our technology and testing method with a trial with a large skincare company, where they tested the efficacy of one of their anti-aging products. The information is collected by a small adhesive tape on the skin, from which Mitra Bio can produce a skin "read-out" which uses epigenetics sequencing to show the markers of the skin.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

The company started in September 2020. We knew that 90% of startups fail because they never achieve product-market fit, so our priority was to quickly get paid-traction from skincare companies and ensure that our technology was in their research pipelines. This was pretty hard as we had no product at that stage.

However, in October 2020 - one month after the company was founded, we received a research contract from a large French skincare company to develop our tool. Soon after, other skincare companies started backing us too. The trial we completed with AVON was paid, which was then that we had the conviction there was a need for our product and we were not

developing a product just for our parents to admire.

Tell us about the working culture at MitraBio

We are a passionate and caring company with a growth mindset! We put the interests of the team ahead of our ego. We challenge the status-quo and give open feedback with a smile. We are passionate about creating a lasting product that goes in history books and customers rave about!

How are you funded?

Since inception, we have raised a total £1.3M. The investors include Entrepreneur First, Illumina Accelerator for startups, InnovateUK and a series of private investors. We are now raising our next round of funding.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

Finding laboratory space in London in the midst of a pandemic was a real challenge. We were faced with a year-long waitlist and restricted access to labs when our product was so dependent on it. Luckily, we got accepted to Illumina Accelerator programme which provided us with the state-of-art laboratory during the pandemic for 6-months.

Finding a lab space for biotech startups in London is still a real challenge. We managed to find a small 2-meter lab bench but I am still looking for larger spaces as we scale.

How does MitraBio answer an unmet need?

Nobody knows whether their skincare is really working, from high-street brands to high-end, what are the additional benefits that the expensive

ones provide? An average woman spends £25K on skincare products in their lifetime. If industry can prove true efficacy and match the right product to the right skin type, the market could double in size. Mitra Bio is addressing this by putting the power in the hands of the consumer.

What's in store for the future?

We are excited to be launching a consumer at-home skin test next year. This will allow consumer users to measure their biological aging. You can sign up to our waitlist to be the first to hear about it once it is out - [sign up here](#).

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

You have to love what you are creating! Being a founder can be one of the most enriching life experiences, if you enjoy the ride.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

I don't have a daily routine. My days adapt to the tasks of the day. Mainly I do all my creative thinking early in the morning (7am to 11am) and then I take calls, send admin emails, etc. I usually finish the day by 1-hour exercise or doing arts.

For me the rules are

1. Sit next to the doers not naysayers (the conversation is different)
2. Be a "giver" rather than a "taker": give back to the community that has helped me come this far.

For More Information: [Website](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#)

Shakiba Kaveh is CEO and cofounder of *Mitra Bio*.

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