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Listen up, Mr. Speaker

► That's what some protesters told state Rep. John Perzel at his district office.

By Tom Waring
Times Staff Writer

Kathryn Sumter-Thomas has long toiled in low-wage jobs.

The North Philadelphia resident earned less than \$6 an hour as a Pathmark cashier and a nursing home caregiver. Today, she makes a little more than \$7 an hour as a hall and cafeteria monitor at LaBrum Middle School in the Far Northeast.

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Acorn supporter Anthony Overstreet gives Rep. John Perzel a pair of minimum-wage workers boots.

JOHN TAGGART / TIMES PHOTO

Will skin cream lead to cancer cure?

By Elizabeth Stieber
Times Staff Writer

Scientific researchers often find themselves going down a path with one hypothesis and ending up with more than one solution.

Such is the case at Dynamis Therapeutics,

a life-science therapeutics company based in Elkins Park, where researchers were trying to reverse complications associated with diabetes and cancer and stumbled upon a bonus.

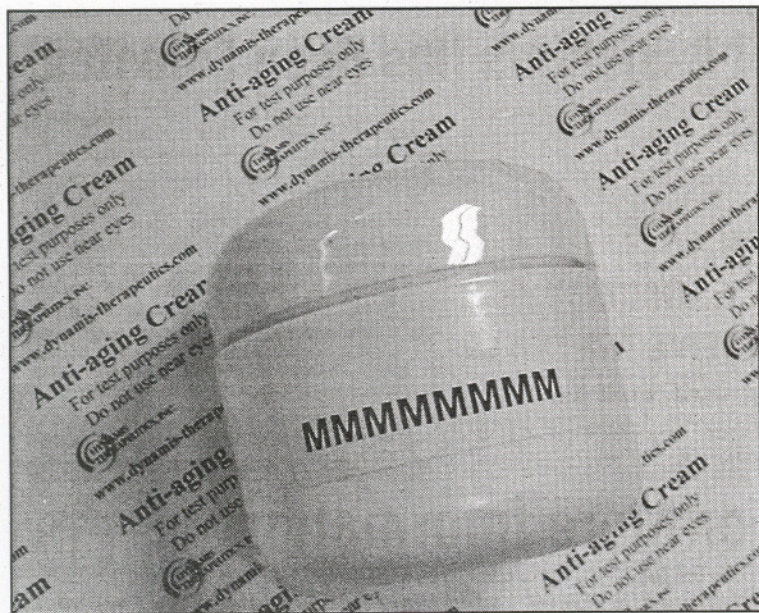
Not only did they find a way to stop skin wrinkling for diabetics, they've also discovered an anti-aging cream.

"What we were looking for is still there, but with a totally unexpected benefit," said Frank Kappler, chief science officer at Dynamis Therapeutics.

And with this potentially lucrative discovery, they're hoping to fund further study to

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ELIZABETH STIEBER / TIMES PHOTOS

At right, Frank Kappler and Annette Tobia, along with other researchers at Dynamis Therapeutics, developed an anti-aging skin cream (above) while searching for a way to slow the effects of diabetes and cancer.

CREAM

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find even more benefits for diabetic and cancer patients.

The study started at Fox Chase Cancer Center, where researchers discovered how the body makes a toxic compound called 3-deoxyglucosone or 3DG, which is found in cancerous tumors, in the blood and kidneys of diabetics and in human skin.

Made by an enzyme in the body, 3DG causes oxidative stress and free radicals, which decrease the production of collagen, causing skin wrinkles and contributing to aging and chronic diseases associated with cancer and diabetes, said Annette Tobia, co-founder, president and CEO of Dynamis Therapeutics.

The researchers also found a molecule that they thought would prevent the body from making the compound.

To further study the molecule's discovery and its potential benefits to diabetes patients, Fox Chase invited Tobia to start a biotech company.

In 1997, Dynamis Therapeutics, was formed, and scientists there set out to prove that 3DG causes aging and diabetic complications.

"We thought that it was important that if we stop the enzyme and stop the 3DG production we could prevent blindness and kidney disease associated with diabetes, since diabetics have twice as much 3DG in their blood as non-diabetics," Tobia said.

Kappler developed compounds that inhibited the enzyme.

"This is sort of an offshoot of (the Fox Chase) study," said Kappler, a Mayfair resident.

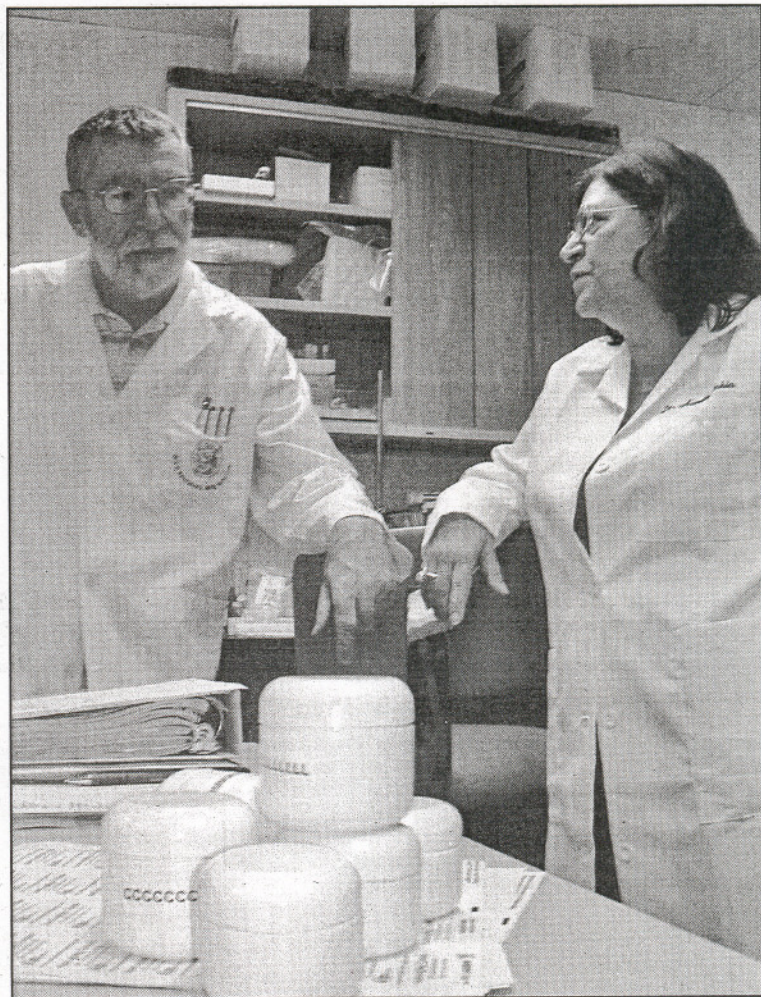
The scientists injected these enzyme-fighting compounds into diabetic rats to see whether they would slow down the effects of diabetes.

While working with the rats, Tobia discovered something interesting — their skin was more taut than usual.

"I could feel a difference in the elasticity in the rats treated with the compounds," Tobia said.

If this compound could affect the skin in such a dramatic way, "we could affect aging in skin," she said.

They ran two small clinical trials on humans using the product in a cream applied to women's skin and found that the cream could actually erase fine lines, known as creping, and prevent dryness, flaking and the loss of skin moisture.



They also conducted further tests . . . on themselves, their family and friends "who loved it," Tobia said.

Even Tobia's 90-year-old mother, Anna Musto, noticed a difference after using the product for a week, Tobia said.

The scientists have no idea why the substance is improving skin as much as it does, but they know that the compound that they are using — which they won't reveal — is approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use in cosmetics, so they determined that it is very safe, Tobia said.

This compound is combined with other natural products, like cocoa butter and purified olive oil.

With the help of private investors, the scientists at Dynamis Therapeutics have

hired a manufacturer to make variations of the skin cream.

The cosmetic line will launch in November through dermatologists, medispas and online, Tobia said.

Dynamis Therapeutics would use the profits to donate a portion back to Fox Chase Cancer Center for research and to fund its own skin-cancer study and an ongoing study to prevent diabetes-caused blindness.

While Tobia advises people to still use sunscreen, "Our hope is that an unexpected side benefit might be that it could prevent cancer in the skin." ●●

For more information, log on to www.dynamis-therapeutics.com

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