CLAIMS

1. A topical oil-in-water emulsion composition comprising:

(a) a discontinuous oil phase;

(b) a continuous aqueous phase comprising water;

(c) a thickening agent;

(d) at least one lamellar membrane structure comprising (i) a phospholipid which is hydrogenated phosphatidylcholine, (ii) a fatty alcohol which is behenyl alcohol or a mixture of cetyl alcohol and behenyl alcohol, and (iii) a fatty acid which is behenic acid, and (iv) an ester of a fatty acid and a fatty alcohol which is isostearyl isostearate,

wherein the fatty alcohol and the phospholipid are present in a weight ratio of from about 10:1 to about 1:1; the fatty alcohol and the fatty acid are present in a weight ratio of from about 10:1 to about 1:1; and the fatty alcohol and the ester are present in a weight ratio of from about 10:1 to about 1:1; and

wherein in use the composition has a water vapor transmission rate of less than about 70 $g.m^{-2}.hr^{-1}$ measured *in vitro* using the *mod*WVTR test methodology.

2. The composition according to claim 1, wherein the composition further comprises glycerin in an amount from about 5% to about 15% by weight, based on the total weight of the composition.

3. The composition according to claim 1, wherein the phospholipid is present in an amount from about 0.5% to about 5% by weight, based on the total weight of the composition.

4. The composition according to claim 1, wherein the fatty alcohol is present in an amount from about 2% to about 15% by weight, based on the total weight of the composition.

5. The composition according to claim 1, wherein the fatty acid is present in an amount from about 0.1% to about 5% by weight, based on the total weight of the composition.

6. The composition according to claim 1, wherein the ester is present in an amount from about 0.1% to about 5% by weight, based on the total weight of the composition.

7. The composition according to claim 1, which further comprises at least one dermatologically acceptable excipient selected from an antioxidant, a chelating agent, a preservative, a colorant, a sensate, a moisturizer, a humectant, a pH adjusting agent, and combinations and mixtures thereof.

8. The composition according to claim 1, which further comprises at least one pharmaceutically acceptable active agent.

9. The composition according to claim 1 wherein the weight ratio of the phospholipid:fatty alcohol:fatty acid:ester is about 1.4:6.4:1:1.