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NEW INNOVATIONS IN HAIR FOLLICLE TRANSPLANTS

Revolutionary Surgery Actually Harvests Body Hair for the Head

ATLANTA, GA, March 10, 2003 — The billion-dollar hair replacement industry is being turned on its head with the first transplant technique that allows doctors to harvest single follicular hair groupings and immediately implant them into balding areas of the scalp. The procedure is called the Follicular Isolation Technique (FIT) and it can utilize hair either from areas on the head or other parts of the body. The technique was developed by Dr John Cole and Dr Paul T Rose.

This is revolutionary on two fronts," says Dr. John Cole, whose team of doctors at the International Hair Transplant Institute in Atlanta pioneered the technique in November. "Not only is FIT a unique technique, which harvests follicular groupings one by one, but it is the first in the United States to successfully utilize hair from all over the body.

LESS INVASIVE

The FIT procedure involves cutting down around the base of the follicle or follicular grouping and removing each one individually without damaging the surrounding follicles. Each individual grouping – which can contain anywhere from one to five hairs each – is then planted in the balding area where it continues to grow and thrive. The area where the follicles were removed from is left with a minute nude scar virtually invisible to the naked eye even on close inspection. Similarly no scars are visible in the areas in which the hairs are implanted.

"This is has the potential to become heads and shoulders above the standard strip procedure," says Dr. Cole, who has eight centers in the United States and several in Europe. Traditionally, surgeons would remove a strip of hair from an abundant source on the head, transplant it to the balding area and then sew the removal site back up leaving a permanent linear scar in the scalp. "This scar might be somewhat covered up by the remaining hair in that area but if that hair begins to thin sometime down the line or you want to shave your head altogether, you may be out of luck because there could be a very ugly scar waiting for you underneath."

During the procedure, the patient is lightly sedated and can listen to music, watch TV or read. "I actually prefer the patient to be awake so they can see the grafts and understand the quality of the procedure," says Dr. Paul T Rose. However, patients can be heavily sedated if they choose.

TREASURE CHEST

The FIT procedure, based on a concept developed by Dr. Ray Woods and only available in Australia, is also the first in the United States to harvest hair from other parts of the body including the chest, stomach and back. In fact, it was found that chest hair grafted to the scalp eventually begins to grow faster and longer than it did when it was on the chest.

"Hair on the top and sides of the scalp most often falls out because primarily of the body's production of dihydrotestosterone, or DHT," says Dr. Paul T Rose. "The follicles on the rest of the body are not effected by this hormone so even after they are grafted to the head, they keep on resisting DHT and they flourish."

APPROPRIATE FOR ANY AGE

Dr. Cole says that the FIT procedure is appropriate for men or women of any age who are losing their hair, especially younger patients in their 20s. It may be useful for patients with limited hair and especially those who had previous procedures and now lack enough donor hair. "Based on the current technology of this procedure, I would go so far as to say that it may become unacceptable to perform the standard strip technique on very young patients with hair loss," he says. "Hair styles and trends are constantly changing so there is no little reason to leave an obvious scar from the standard strip on a young man who may later decide to get a crew cut or shave his head altogether."

HOW LONG, HOW MUCH

Although the degree of hair loss varies from person to person, Dr. Cole says the average male will receive anywhere from 1000 to 2,500 grafts per session. In a typical session of FIT, between 500 to 1,200 follicular groups (approximately 1000 to 3200 hairs) can be grafted, so the whole procedure can be performed in as short a time as 1 to 3 days.

Noticeable marks in the donor and recipient areas will often fade in about a week. "This heals much faster than any other method and there is far less discomfort," says Dr. Paul T Rose. "In addition, FIT transplants generally cost slightly more than strips.

The FIT procedure is also compatible with other hair restoration methods that men and women may already be using, such as drugs, creams or cold lasers.

LOCATIONS

The International Hair Transplant Institute is the only place in the United States where the FIT procedure is being performed. They have centers in Atlanta, Charlotte, Tampa, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Wheaton (MD) and Washington, DC. International locations include London, Paris and Athens. Consumers can contact the clinic nearest them by calling 1-800-368-HAIR (4247).

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