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HAIR TRANSPLANT *f*orum INTERNATIONAL

***Dateline NBC* Segment Underscores Importance of Managing Patient Expectations**

On January 12, a US network television news magazine, *Dateline NBC*, aired a segment about hair restoration surgery, which featured a hidden-camera investigation of a US hair restoration clinic conducted last summer.

The story was prompted by allegations of a dissatisfied patient who claims that he was "deceived and disfigured" by clinic staff, because realistic results and the need to plan for future hair loss were not discussed with him. The patient was allegedly promised a thick and full head of hair after only 2 hair restoration procedures. After more than 7 years, 7 surgeries, and \$50,000, the patient remains dissatisfied, and hides the results of the surgeries under a hat.

A former clinic employee was also interviewed for the segment, and accused the clinic of misleading patients.

Dr. James Vogel, President of the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery (ISHRS), says the segment demonstrates that doctors have an obligation to manage the expectations of their patients.

"In any form of medicine, whether it be open-heart surgery, setting a fracture, or cosmetic surgery, it is important that the expectations and goals of the patient are commensu-

rate with what the doctor can reliably predict," said Vogel. "If a discrepancy exists between a patient's expectations and the predicted result, the discrepancy should be addressed, because neither the doctor nor the patient will be satisfied with the results in the long run."

According to Dr. Vogel, some recommendations for managing the expectations of patients are: Explain that hair restoration is fundamentally a matter of supply and demand — a limited or decreasing supply exists in the face of increasing demand over time. Thus, it is important to develop a strategy or 'blueprint' of hair restoration based upon a prediction of future hair loss. This strategy must **STAND THE TEST OF TIME**. Work with the patient as a partner to achieve desired results. Adhere to the code of ethics established by the Society.

"In cosmetic surgery in particular, patients want to hear certain things that may or may not be realistic," Dr. Robert Leonard, immediate Past President of ISHRS, said. "The best guideline is to treat every patient as though they were a member of your own family."

The *Dateline NBC* anchor closed the segment by encouraging those interested in pursuing hair restoration surgery to be "good consumers"

and learn as much as possible before moving forward.

If you are a member of ISHRS and interested in receiving a transcript of the *Dateline NBC* story, please contact ISHRS at 800-444-2737. Members will be charged \$5 for shipping and handling. ■

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