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The Density Issue — A Debate That Refuses To Die

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It is impossible to attend a meeting devoted to hair restoration or to read any significant volume of literature devoted to the subject without coming upon the pros and cons of density relative to the technique used. Classically the argument is made in favor of large grafts producing better density and small grafts reducing lesser densities in the final product. Having converted after 18 years of large graft hair transplantation to the last ten years of small graft transplantation exclusively, I continue to be puzzled at this debate. Perhaps I am simply not seeing what others see on a regular basis.

To answer this question in my own mind, I began to randomly count the actual hair density (hairs per square centimeter) along the mid-portion



Figure 1. Case 1. Frontal hairline restoration immediately post-operatively. 46 follicular unit minimicrografts per square cm.

of the right and left frontal hairlines. Both plug cases transplanted in the standard four-session technique with minimicrograft cases planted in our standard methodology with sessions ranging from one to four sessions were counted. The preliminary findings were described at the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1996, and subsequently published.¹ Based upon these studies, it is quite evident that equivalent density can be accomplished with minimicrografting techniques with fewer sessions required and a total absence of the "process plugginess"² associated with plug and other larger graft restoration techniques. Since the completion of the data collection for the publication we have continued to randomly collect data on flap, plug, and minimicrograft cases during the last year. This data reflects that our minimicrograft cases done within the last 12 to 18 months average 61 hairs per square centimeter along the first centimeter of the frontal hair restoration zone after one session of minimicrografts consisting of naturally occurring follicular units. After two sessions the average density is 81 hairs per square centimeter. The plug cases average 64 hairs per square cen-

timeter after four plug sessions. Since we have not used the plug transplant technique for the last 10 years, many of these cases counted were transplanted 10-25 years previously. The flap cases (work done by other hair restoration surgeons not in our practice) average 142 hairs per square centimeter.

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