



Whatever Happened to Lasers?

After hearing a great deal about lasers a few years ago, there has been a great silence. Dr. Beehner made contact with several doctors who have extensive laser experience and asked them to comment on the current state of the laser in hair restoration. WMP



Dr. Albert J. Nemeth's Sapphire Erbium Laser handpiece with sapphire tip in place. See page 292 for Dr. Nemeth's comments.

Walter P. Unger, MD
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

With regard to the enquiry about laser hair transplanting: I originally started experimenting with lasers in order to produce a slot-recipient site. My purposes specifically were *not* aimed at decreasing bleeding or decreasing postoperative pain, both of which I had ample means of controlling. I was looking for a graft that would look less "pluggy" than a round graft but would contain an equal amount of hair, thus maximizing the production of density per session. A narrow rectangular graft seemed to "fit the bill" but I needed a rectangular recipient site in which to put it. At the time, there was no such thing as slot punches. However, if I used a laser (which ablates tissue as it incises) I could make a "slot" instead of a "slit" and therefore have an appropriate recipient site for such a graft.

I spent nearly five years experimenting with various lasers in an effort to

find or develop one that was "user friendly" and that could produce these slot sites with a consistent depth and with minimal lateral thermal damage. I initially cooperated with Coherent Inc. but later branched out to study other types of lasers. The bottom line was that the laser companies were too slow in making the changes that I asked for. After five years, I was simply exhausted from trying the various machines that answered only half my requests at any given time. At about the same time, the slot punch was developed and I found I could produce the same type of site that I made with the laser but with cold steel. This could be done more rapidly and with the absence of any thermal damage. In my view, there simply is no need to use a laser to make recipient sites at this point. They can be made just as rapidly without any thermal damage using a needle in the case of a micrograft and a slot punch in the case of slot grafts. The laser companies also had been slow in producing a scanner that could create consistent patterns that would have been advantageous and that would have given an edge to the laser although I had worked with them for several years in doing this. I should also add that the lasers were not user friendly. It became quite a job for most people to learn how to use them properly. I did have rather remarkable

results in many of my patients. (Please see 3rd edition of *Hair Transplantation*).

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The ISHRS Golden Follicle Award sculpture, as seen on the cover of this issue, was designed by Francisco Abril, MD. Dr. Abril offers for sale, copies of a small bronze hair follicle sculpture (10" high). For more information, please contact: Clinica Dr. Francisco Abril, PO dela Habana, 137, 28036 Madrid, Spain. Phone: 34-1-359-1961; Fax: 34-1-359-4731.



President's Message



Robert S. Haber, MD
Mayfield Heights, Ohio

This is an exciting time of year to be President. The initial flurry of ideas has now evolved into the reality of committees and planning. The Annual Meeting planning is well underway, with exciting ideas becoming a reality for New York this October, and the Membership Directory is nearing completion, and should be mailed in the near future. The engine of the Society is in full gear, and we're enjoying the ride.

I'm pleased to report that *every member* who expressed an interest in becoming more involved in the activities of the Society now finds him- or herself serving on one of the permanent or ad hoc committees that perform much of the important work of the Society. We're serious when we say we want you to get involved!

I receive calls and e-mails from our members on a regular basis regarding a number of challenges facing us, and I would like to review for you my use of committees to help solve these issues. You should be familiar with the permanent standing committees, as listed in the Directory. We could not function well without them.

In addition, four new ad hoc committees have been created. The Ad Hoc

Committee on Artificial Hair Fibers, chaired by Martin Unger, MD, is charged with the task of critically evaluating this highly controversial area, and making recommendations to the Society. The Ad Hoc Committee on Internet Monitoring, chaired by Bessam Farjo, MD, is charged with keeping an eye on controversial Websites, so that we as a Society can respond to inaccurate or unethical information and activities. The Ad Hoc Committee on Standard of Care and Core Curriculum Development, chaired by Tony Mangubat, MD, is charged with evaluating the need for and feasibility of creating written standards by which we can learn and teach. And finally, the Ad Hoc Committee on Continuing Medical Education, chaired by Paul Cotterill, MD, is charged with ensuring that our Society adheres to the rigorous standards and expectations required for us to take the next step forward and offer our own accredited CME.

If you have an opinion to express regarding these topics, direct them to the committee chair. We can only enact positive change for the good of the Society and the field of hair restoration surgery with the active contributions of many of our members. You may of course contact me directly about these or other issues as well.

Make plans to come to New York! I look forward to seeing you there. ♦

Bob Haber, MD

To Submit an Article or Letter to the Forum Editors

Please send submissions via a 3½" disk or e-mail, double space and use a 12 point type size. Remember to include all photos and figures referred to in your article as separate attachments (JPEG, Tiff, or Bitmap). For e-mail submissions, be sure to ATTACH your file(s)—*DO NOT* embed it in the e-mail itself. We prefer e-mail submissions with the appropriate attachments.

Send to:

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Submission deadlines: May/June, April 10;
July/August, May 15*.

*Please note earlier submission deadline
for this issue.

Co-Editors' Messages



William M. Parsley, MD
Louisville, Kentucky

On January 31 and February 1, 2003, Dr. Dow Stough had a meeting in Hot Springs, Arkansas, that was exceptional in that teams from the offices of several transplant centers

came to demonstrate their techniques. Among them were teams from Drs. Stough, David Seager, Bobby Limmer, and Victor Hasson. The meeting was kept small, though not as small as planned, to allow plenty of exchange. It served its purpose so well that I can't remember a much more valuable meeting in my 29 years in the field. In addition to the above, Drs. John Cole, Robert Jones, and Alan Feller demonstrated and shared their work on follicular

unit extraction (FUE). Combined with Dr. Hasson's coronal grafting, this gave great information about two of the currently "hot" items in our field. This small meeting is the perfect complement to the larger meetings, such as ISHRS's Orlando Live Surgery Workshop, the ESHRS meeting, and, of course, the ISHRS Annual Meeting. One tip: If Dr. Stough has his meeting next year, sign up soon or you will find the registration closed.

Dr. Stough does not shy away from controversy, he seeks it out. He invited Pat Hennessey from the Hair Transplant Network and Farrel Manne from Hair Loss Help (he also invited Spencer Kobren from TheBaldTruth, but he had to cancel). These individuals run Web sites that are consumer oriented and are often not kind to the ISHRS and many doctors. There was a healthy interchange that seemed to improve our

mutual understanding. The Internet is a looming presence that has and will continue to have a major impact on the public perception of the ISHRS and on our field in general.

Visiting the various Internet hair restoration Web sites is quite interesting. These sites include the Hair Transplant Network, the Bald Truth, Hair Loss Help, Hair Loss Talk, Regrowth.com, and others. They are a blend of information on established techniques and recent developments along with summaries of most non-surgical hair loss treatments. Most commonly, the sites have a group of recommended doctors who are invited to join by the sponsors and, after paying a fee, benefit from the advertising.

Of most interest to me are the "forums," "chat," or "message" areas where patients and prospective patients post their opinions, some-

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PLEASE NOTE: At a March 18 teleconference of the Board of Directors of the ABHRS and IBHRS, it was decided that, if world events were still unsettled and tense in the weeks just before the Berlin meeting, the IBHRS exam would then be offered instead on Sunday afternoon, October 19, 2003, following the ISHRS Annual Meeting in New York. Any changes will be announced on the Website at www.abhrs.org. —WMP/MLB



Michael L. Beehner, MD
Saratoga Springs, New York

In the recent winter edition of the ESHRS Journal, I was very impressed with the thoughtfulness of the page-one editorial by its editor and founder, Dr. Patrick Frechet,

in which he brought up the need in our specialty for good research studies that try to answer the basic questions regarding the relative merits of the various competing methods for transplanting hair. Each year, it seems an entirely new wave hits the shore, proclaiming to be *the* answer to

providing the best state-of-the-art transplant results. In the past year, a small number of physicians have proclaimed that the FUE procedure is the ideal, "scar-less" way to obtain all donor grafts, a proposal that has been ardently embraced by all the unhappy people that live on the internet bemoaning their wide donor scars. To his credit, Dr. Bill Rassman, in his *Dermatologic Surgery* article, did stress that this method will probably end up having a *limited* role in our field. More recently, others are now wondering if all FU recipient sites shouldn't be made as tiny, coronally-oriented slits in a "dense-packing" fashion of up to 50–60 per cm², as Drs. Victor Hasson and Jerry Wong have suggested.

What Dr. Frechet stated in his article

was that we now have ways of measuring "hair mass," and could thus compare, side-by-side, two different methods by measuring the resultant hair growth after a given period of time. There is also the old stand-by method of manual hair counts in tattooed "study boxes." Oftentimes, the hype that attracts followers to a new approach (both surgeons and patients) is based on a few "wow" photos of patients who have ideal hair characteristics with coarse hair and a high number of hairs per average FU.

The following are some of the questions that I think are most urgent to answer at this time: Where is the limit on the degree to which we can insult the scalp's vasculature in terms

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Notes from the Editor Emeritus



Richard C. Shiell, MBBS
Melbourne, Australia

I was disappointed to read Dr. Jim Swinehart's comments in the last issue of the *Forum*. He was upset about what he perceived as official neglect

of his own hair meetings in Denver, Colorado, compared with the amount of publicity received by Dr. Matt Leavitt's Orlando, Florida, meeting. As a past Editor, I can assure Jim that we editors are desperate for copy in any form. It is up to the meeting convenors to organise this copy by delegating writers to the task or by doing it themselves. *Forum* Editors are unpaid and have enough on their hands keeping up with the big gatherings without having to keep tabs on all the smaller meetings as well. Dr. Swinehart may be surprised to discover that his is not the only meeting that has received no publicity. I am well aware of excellent small meetings conducted by Drs. Marc Avram, Jim Vogel, Arturo Sandoval, and Dow Stough in recent years that received little announcement and no formal coverage in the *Forum*.

The year has already seen a very successful meeting organized by Dr. Stough in Hot Springs, Arkansas, this past January. This was the home of all the early International hair transplant meetings back in the 1970s when they were run by his indefatigable father, Dr. Bluford Stough III. It has always been a point of great regret to me that Blu and some of his notable colleagues, such as Tom Alt, never saw the value of joining the ISHRS or even attending our meetings. They have decades of experience and I am sure they would enjoy the company of the younger generation of hair transplanters, as many of us still do.

Dr. Dow Stough's meeting gener-

ated some very favourable comment and a great deal of interest was shown in two techniques in particular. First, were the *coronally angled grafts (CAG)* of Drs. Victor Hasson and Jerry Wong. These are not new, having been around for years and presented at several past meetings, but it would appear that their time has come and they are now receiving serious attention by other surgeons in the field. The claim is that the coronally oriented slits can allow the new hair to sit flatter and give a thicker, more natural appearance than with traditional sagittal slits. They, along with several others, also demonstrated their ability to plant grafts into 0.7mm slits at a consistent density of 50 FUs per square cm.

Follicular unit extraction also received considerable attention, and although Drs. Bill Rassman and Bob Bernstein were not in attendance, the FUE techniques are being tacked with vigor by others such as Drs. John Cole, Roy Jones, and Alan Feller. While few would advocate FUE as a standard approach to hair restoration, it obviously has a role to play in certain cases. As Dr. Ray Woods is apparently not going to share his experiences with us, these techniques and indications must be discovered anew.

The next highlight of the year will be Matt Leavitt's Orlando Meeting and, although I will be unable to attend, I am sure that those of you who do so will be amply rewarded for your effort. The pace and stimulus provided by this mixing of minds is legendary and must be experienced at least once by every serious hair transplant.

The Pendulum of Scientific Fashion

It is always a delight to read editions of the *Forum* from earlier years and to see what controversies dominated the newsletter at that time. In the early 1990s, small grafts, microscopically

dissected, were a curiosity advocated mostly by Drs. Bobby Limmer and Dow Stough, but the term "follicular units" did not come into common usage until around the mid 1990s. At that time, the new techniques had not advanced sufficiently for the density of follicular unit grafting to rival conventional large grafts, and most surgeons were not overly impressed with these controversial and labor-intensive methods. At the same time, great interest was being shown in Dr. Patrick Frechet's methods for correction of the thousands of "slot deformities" resulting from serial scalp reduction procedures. It was a couple of years before it we reluctantly concede that, as with Juri flaps, the surgical touch required for successful Frechet "triple flaps" was beyond the average hair replacement surgeon and Dr. Frechet continues to battle on alone.

The multi-bladed knife had been introduced in the early 1990s with up to 11 blades distributed along a 2.2cm front. The purpose of this was to get enough material for the "megasections" of grafts that had been popularized by the Moser Group in 1992 and pushed to the limit by Dr. Rassman by 1994. The wide donor scars seen in some patients gradually deterred all but the most intrepid transplanters, however, and within a year or two most surgeons limited the donor width to around 1cm and minigrafts to under 2,000.

Just when we thought that minigrafts cut from strips and inserted into slits would become the staple, along came the laser. These machines were extremely expensive but many dermatologists already had one "in-house" so there was a strong temptation to find additional uses for it. While Dr. Walter Unger cautiously conducted controlled laser trials, other surgeons threw caution to the wind and rushed to perform ever-larger sessions.

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