



President's Message

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The Future of the Hair Transplant Industry

After continuous evolution in the hair transplant procedure over the past three decades, we are now facing a dilemma: super high-quality clinics on the one side, offering an artistic and artisanal hair transplant that makes us really proud, and on the other side, we have the “industrial scale, assembly line” hair transplant clinics. The latter has been under the radar for a while, but now the bad results are surfacing...mainly in Europe and around the Mediterranean, but soon, they will be seen everywhere.

What we're seeing is just the tip of the iceberg; soon all this will be discovered by the public and can affect HT credibility worldwide. The low-quality HT has many faces: 1) the assembly lines—where 10, 20, or more HTs are done per day, and/or 2) the untrained doctors who supervise a procedure they don't know, which is entirely an unethical practice; yes, that's correct: a surgeon who is legally responsible for a procedure that he/she doesn't have expertise in and is blindly trusting the work offered by techs who are hired or offered by companies. This is a perfect example of the merchandising of medicine: unethical behavior and no care for the patient, which is ultimately our major goal as physicians. What a shame.

In response, the ISHRS has created our Black Market Awareness Campaign (BMAC), which received massive support from our members during the World Congress in Hollywood; thank you all! During the annual business meeting, we asked members about the campaign and of the 100 members who voted, 95% of them supported this campaign...remarkable!

To start, we recorded several interviews with members about the BMAC, and there is much more to come. It is not an easy task to alert the public about these low-quality HT clinics that are only focused on money, are unethical and many times illegal, and that produce disastrous results such as donor area depletion, bizarre low hairlines, or poor hair growth.

If nothing is done, it will be the end of HT as we know it. This is not fair to the patients who are getting harmed. Now is the time for us to unite. We need to fight the black market on many fronts and are focusing on the following:

1. **Communicate to the public about what the black market is and the harm it can cause to unknowing patients.** There is nothing better than getting information directly from the source: stories from patients damaged by the black market clinics. If you have patients suffering the consequences of a black market procedure, we encourage you to ask them to help us by sharing their story. Please email us at BlackMarketAwareness@ISHRS.org. We need to record these personal experiences. Please contribute!
2. **Communicate to other medical societies.** Most physicians around the world have no idea that this problem exists. We must inform them. The ISHRS is preparing a PowerPoint presentation for our members to use to share this information with any other medical society for which they will give a lecture. It is important not only to alert prospective patients but also to inform physicians “outside HT” so they don't unknowingly get trapped by companies irresponsibly offering them easy money through unethical behavior.
3. **Advance legal efforts to combat this issue.** Although it takes time, we are also trying this route.

This is what we can do now. At this point, anyone or any group that wants to join our BMAC is welcome—for the good of the patients, for the dignity of our profession. If you would like to support us and be involved, contact any member of the Board of Governors or Executive Committee as each and every one of us will be pleased to help you.

We are also accepting donations for our BMAC. We can only succeed with your full support!

Thank you so much. ■

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