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New Strategies for Using Grafts Harvested from Outside the Safe Zone

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary hair restoration practice, harvesting grafts outside of the traditional safe donor zone has become commonplace. This occurs because of the need to avoid overharvesting, to homogenize the appearance of the donor, and to obtain the maximal lifetime donor grafts with follicular unit excision (FUE). In the majority of practices, grafts harvested from outside the safe zone are not treated any differently than those harvested from inside the safe zone, despite being more likely to be dihydrotestosterone (DHT) sensitive and to not survive as long as those from inside the safe zone when transplanted.¹ The author proposes several strategies to intentionally place grafts harvested from outside the safe zone that optimize the utility of these grafts and minimize potential problems created by their use.

Keywords: dihydrotestosterone, follicular unit excision, safe donor zone

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INTRODUCTION

With the emergence of follicular unit excision (FUE) as the predominant modality of graft harvesting in hair restoration surgery around the world, harvesting outside the traditional safe zone has become routine. This happens for three main reasons:

1. In a majority of cases, to get more than 2,500 grafts in a single surgery, the surgeon must harvest outside the traditional safe zone to avoid overharvesting (Figure 1).
2. In order for the donor area to look natural, particularly when the hair is worn short, the surgeon must harvest above and below the safe zone to create a homogenous appearance (Figure 2).

FIGURE 1. Two examples of large harvests of $\pm 3,000$ in which harvesting was very wide and included not only the safe zone but also the upper and lower intermediate zones.



FIGURE 2. (A) A patient with native low density. Difference in density in harvested safe zone and above and below is not so evident, but with another harvest it would be evident. (B) The cosmetic problem when FUE harvesting is confined to the safe zone only. (C) The homogenized cosmetic appearance when the harvesting is extended above and below the safe zone.

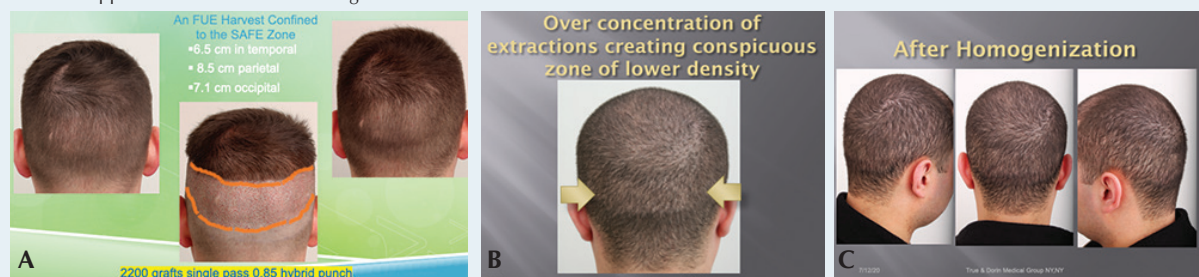


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