

IN THIS ISSUE

Lichen Planopilaris Mimicking Androgenic Alopecia: The Importance of Using a Dermatoscope

Aesthetic Importance of the Parietal Eminence Area (Posterior Parietal Triangle), an Essential Island of Scalp Requiring Hair Restoration

Fifteen Steps to Pull a Graft

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the 15 steps for a safe and fast follicular extraction using the follicular unit excision (FUE) technique to achieve the highest success rate in this important part of hair transplant process. The choice of the correct equipment, the extraction technique, and the sequence to be followed in the donor area are described in detail to standardize and improve the training of doctors and technicians in follicular extraction.

Keywords: excision, extraction, forceps, harvesting, pull grafts

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INTRODUCTION

All stages of hair transplantation using the follicular unit excision (FUE) technique are important for the survival of the transplanted follicular units (FUs)—from punching to extraction, manipulation, and storage, and finally for placement.¹ Assistants are a fundamental part of the team necessary for a successful hair transplant. Their active participation is crucial in harvesting FUs in a fast and efficient way. Of all the components of FUE, the extraction, or graft removal, phase has received the least attention in publications. In the article “Forty Steps to Harvest a Graft,” we mentioned that graft extraction is an important step for the success of the surgery.² Now we detail each of the steps essential to the process that our experience has shown to increase the success rate in extraction in a fast and efficient way.

Pulling grafts is a process that ideally should be fast and atraumatic. Harvesting without using proper technique can lead to trauma and consequent loss of part of or all of the viability of the FUs. Here we describe the technique we use in which graft extraction is performed with the patient lying down, either in the prone or lateral decubitus position.³ In cases in which the surgeon prefers for the patient to be seated, the sequence may be different and will not be discussed as it is not part of our routine.

Easy cases do exist. Pulling the grafts can be a simple task even for a beginner. Graft removal is easiest when there is high color contrast between the hair and the scalp, when there are no deep graft attachments, when there is little bleeding, when the skin is firm and resistant to injury (low risk of decapitation even when excessive pressure is applied), when the follicles are also firm and resistant to injury (even if the punch causes friction around the bulb there is no injury), and when consistent and uniform punch excisions are made by the surgeon. However, these cases are the exception rather than the rule. Very often we face challenging cases, and when we do, mastering the 15 steps described below will make it possible to pull quality grafts safely and with a high rate of success.

STEP 1: USE QUALITY LOUPES

Vision and lighting are basic requirements for fast and efficient work. It is unacceptable to carry out such a procedure with only the naked eye. Likewise, while cheap plastic loupes help, they are not comparable to high-quality loupes. Choice of type of loupe can be guided by personal preference. They can be glasses (flip-up), TTL type, or with a helmet. We prefer the helmet loupes with a magnification of 4X to 5X for assistants and 6X for the surgeon and with an LED light attached (Figure 1). Working distance

FIGURE 1. A 6X loupe is used by the surgeon and 5X loupe by the technicians.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 73 Fifteen Steps to Pull a Graft
- 75 President's Message
- 76 Guest Co-Editors' Messages
- 77 Notes from the Editor Emeritus: Dr. Francisco Jimenez
- 84 Lichen Planopilaris Mimicking Androgenic Alopecia: The Importance of Using a Dermatoscope
- 87 Aesthetic Importance of the Parietal Eminence Area (Posterior Parietal Triangle), an Essential Island of Scalp Requiring Hair Restoration
- 90 How I Do It: My Clinical Experience with Needle and Laser SMP Devices
- 94 Controversies
- 96 The Notable Articles Project
- 101 Meeting Review: Review of the 2021 ABCRS Workshop
- 103 Message from the ISHRS 2022 World Congress Program Chair
- 104 Hear from the Assistants
- 107 ABHRS President's Corner
- 108 Classified Ads
- 109 Calendar of Events

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