

BaldManMag June 2010

Thursday, June 3, 2010 4:22 PM

From: "D.J. Verret, MD" <info@baldmanmag.com>
To: info@innovationsfps.com

BaldManMag.com
edited by D.J. Verret, MD

The latest information about hair loss and treatment.

The pros and cons of follicular unit extraction (FUE)

There is a lot of media attention paid to a method of obtaining hair follicles - follicular unit extraction. The method is often touted as leaving no scars, painless, and creating results equal to or better than current strip excision methods. Unfortunately, the hype doesn't match the science. The first mention of follicular unit extraction in the medical literature dates back to 2002. Since that time, very few studies have been published looking at follicular unit extraction or its long term results. In fact, the studies which have been published have looked at complications rates and transection rates of grafts and not at long term survival of grafts.

Why is this important? Several studies done on FUE show a relative high transection rate of up to 30%. This means that of the hairs harvested, 30% are cut in a way that will make them non-viable. This is not surprising since hair follicles have a variable angulation and blindly cutting as with FUE tends to randomly cut the follicles. This can result in decreased survival. No studies have looked at long term graft survival after FUE and some others have mentioned that they have seen hairs falling out with a characteristic curved pattern which indicates that the follicles either did not survive or were not transplanted - suggesting a decreased take rate over traditional measures.

Now the big advantage to FUE is supposedly a decreased scar. Strip excision leaves a linear scar on the back of the scalp which can widen over time and be noticeable. Fortunately, with meticulous closure techniques, this tends not to be a problem. FUE is not scarless. Anytime the skin is cut, there will be a scar left. FUE relies on scarring and wound contraction to decrease the visibility of scars but if the head is shaved, hundreds or even thousands of small scars will be seen. There is also a risk of a cottage cheese appearance to the scalp if large FUE sessions are performed.

Another limitation is that the hair in the donor area has to be shaved for extraction. With traditional strip excision, the donor area is completely removed and normal hair remains on either side of the wound to completely cover the donor site. So who should consider FUE? In some cases FUE by a skilled and experienced surgeon is a good alternative to conventional methods. Patients who may have a thin donor area or have undergone multiple previous transplants with limited donor area are good candidates for FUE. Patients who are interested in relatively small transplants would be better candidates than those who need larger transplants - preferably 1000 grafts or less.

Though a promising technology, there are still many studies to be done to prove the value of the procedure. Though FUE has been around since 2002, strip excision with follicular unit transplants still remain the gold standard for hair transplantation around the world.

Follow Dr. Verret in the media

Join Dr. Verret for discussions across the country on hair loss and other topics at <http://drverret.com/media.html>.

For questions or to suggest content, send an e-mail to info@newsletter.innovationsfps.com

--

If you do not want to receive any more newsletters, [this link](#)

To update your preferences and to unsubscribe visit [this link](#)

Forward a Message to Someone [this link](#)

