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History of hair transplantation

The early years

The first successful hair transplants were carried out by Professor Dom Unger in Germany in 1822. A medical student named Diffenbach explains how procedures were carried out on humans and animals, and that Professor Unger believed hair transplantations would make baldness “a rarity in the future”.

The technique made its first big step in Japan in 1939, when a Japanese dermatologist named Okuda first described the punch technique. In 1943, a surgeon called Tamura had treated 137 cases of non-androgenetic alopecia of various etiologies using techniques very similar to modern-day hair transplantation.

Tamura harvested donor grafts by making an elliptical incision that was sutured closed, and prepared recipient sites using a thick needle. The grafts were stored in saline, and observed how the transplanted hairs went into the telogen (resting) phase post operation. Importantly, he reflected that single-hair grafting resulted in growth practically indistinguishable from naturally grown hair--and much more natural looking than hair transplants using larger punch grafts.

Nevertheless, it would take several decades for Western surgeons to embrace the wisdom of Tamura’s insights as World War II effectively halted the flow of these findings out of Japan.



Growing practice

Hair transplantation was re-discovered by Dr. Norman Orentreich in New York in 1952. He is often accredited for starting the modern era of hair transplantation. Unfortunately, the work carried out by pioneers such as Orentreich, Stough, Ayres and Rabineau mirrored the 4mm, “punch” technique of Okuda, rather than the “micrograft” technique of Tamura.

In the 1960s and 70s, Physicians first began performing hair transplants for cosmetic improvement. However, their first attempts are unsuccessful as the hair results in a “bristle brush-baby doll” appearance. This is due to the fact that the grafts contain an astounding 15 to 25 hairs! Although it is easy to look back critically on these procedures, they did provide important findings that are still valuable today.

In 1984, Dr. Wayne Bradshaw introduced the idea of making small incisions into the recipient area, then filling those incisions with what he called minigrafts. These grafts contained only six to eight hairs, but still resembled the “plug” effect of the previous decades.

The modern era

The techniques progressed in the 1990s, improving significantly as the number of hairs per grafts fell below six and the number of graft transplants per session increased between 1600 and 3000.

This culminated in the FUE method in 2002, which was first performed in Australia by Dr Ray Wood, before being popularized by Drs William Rassman and Robert Bernstein’s 2002 publication Follicular Unit Extraction FUE.

In the past six years, FUE has grown in popularity, offering state-of-the-art combinations of different size grafts (e.g., from one to six hairs) to make endless variations of placing the hair to create a natural look. While the surgical technique is still important, sound aesthetic judgment is also a must if surgeons are to deliver virtually undetectable hair restorations.

Read more about hair transplantation:

<http://www.ilterclinic.com>