Many times in life, it’s about overcoming the genes we have, in order to live better and longer,” says Dr. Arthur David Zacco in a conversation in his Anti-Aging and Aesthetics Medical Center in Apex.

“Sometimes hair loss can be devastating to both men and women. Hair restoration in the form of hair transplantation can be life changing and can not only permanently restore your living growing hair, but it can restore your self-image.”

Hair transplantation is one important component of a comprehensive program Dr. Zacco offers to retain and/or regain health and a youthful, vibrant appearance for his patients. He is the first and only physician in Wake County to earn certification from the American Board of Anti-Aging and Regenerative Medicine, and is also board-certified in family practice.

“From these complementary perspectives, my goal is to optimize my patient’s health using both anti-aging medicine (optimizing hormones and thyroid, correcting nutrient deficiencies, adrenal function, etc.) and cosmetic surgery (hair transplantation, Botox, Juvederm and Restylane fillers, etc.) To combat the aging process, it’s essential to focus both internally and externally,” he says.

And it is true to say that he has a compelling interest in hair restoration since 1995. “Life’s twists and turns are quite unpredictable,” he says with a smile. “A medical school classmate, after graduation, opened a hair restoration practice and asked me to help him out. I found the work challenging and absolutely fascinating and have subsequently been engaged in it since 1995. It is immensely rewarding to work with both men and women and experience with them what is really a transformative event, ranging from mildly wonderful to absolutely rejuvenating in all parts of their lives.

ALOPECIA

“Male and female pattern alopecia is the medical term to describe the most common type of hair loss,” he explains. “If a patient has the genes for hair loss, at a predetermined age and duration, hair loss will occur. When follicles in a certain area of the scalp are exposed to specific hormones—especially DHT in males (dihydrotestosterone)—the follicles atrophy and stop producing hair.

“The area involved is evident in the usual areas of hair loss, termed male pattern alopecia. However, even though this is perhaps the most popular way to think of hair loss, it’s not the most common. Through practicing anti-aging medicine, I have become acutely aware that there are many reasons for alopecia, including too little or too much hormones, certain medications, nutritional deficiencies, stress, sleep disturbances, and many more. Evaluating these issues is a key part of an anti-aging, comprehensive workup.

“The good news is that the area of the scalp where hair is resistant to hair loss, on the sides and back of the scalp, has different genetic expression than the hair that is thinning or disappearing. Our first task is to work with the patient to design the outcome, the finished look, she or he wants to accomplish. And the next step is to remove hair from the resistant areas and transplant those hairs into the areas susceptible to hair loss.

“More really good news: Once that hair is transplanted, the follicles resistant to loss retain their genetic coding and continue to produce hair for the entire life of the individual. Hair grows and grays naturally. You can style, cut and color your hair as you wish. It absolutely does not require any special treatment or care. The transplantation, when performed properly, is virtually undetectable. It really is the gold standard for hair restoration—the one permanent solution to hair loss that requires no additional care or cost.”

By the nature of what he does, Dr. Zacco has become an expert in understanding the potential of a full range of hair products and procedures. “I’m always willing to share information I have with people who are exploring options,” he says. “Not everyone is a candidate for hair transplant surgery. And what I’ve discovered is that many of these treatments, over time, are at least as costly as hair transplantation and none is a permanent solution for hair loss. Other options such as wigs, weaves, gels, pills, lotions and potions demand an endless, time consuming preoccupation with the whole issue of hair loss.”

DEMANDING SURGERY

Imagine sorting and arranging thousands of individual hairs and their supporting structures (such as sweat and oil glands) into natural appearing patterns and you can begin to understand the demands of hair transplant surgery. “Today, the state of the art in this field is Follicular Unit Transplantation,” says Dr. Zacco.

“Hair emerges from the scalp in groups called follicular units—FUs. Each FU can include from one to five hairs. We use stereomicroscopes to isolate these follicular units in the process of creating ultra fine follicular unit grafts.

“The single hair follicular units (about 0.5 mm in diameter) are placed in the frontal hairline, producing a feathered and very natural hairline. Follicular unit grafts containing from two to five hairs are placed behind the hair line, to add thickness and density (see photos). The end result is really quite an amazing blending of science and art. That is why my hair transplantation surgery looks so natural: because we transplant the hairs into the scalp, the same way they grow out of the scalp. I have never transplanted the big, bulky plugs that don’t look natural. In fact, it is very rewarding for me to do corrective work for patients who have had these bulky plugs implanted elsewhere.”

Typically, a hair transplant surgery session may last for an entire day, and often two or even more sessions are required to complete the work.

A man in his late 20s we’ll call Robert, who understandably prefers to be anonymous, had a one-day transplant session last December (see photos), and is scheduled for his final surgery this month. Over three thousand follicular units (over 7,500 hairs) were harvested from one site and transplanted where they were badly needed. And it’s true, Dr. Zacco emphasizes, that the approach with each patient is highly individualized.

Robert comes from a family where hair loss is the accepted norm, especially for males, but he was disturbed when his hairline began its disappearing act. There was very little discomfort during his day-long surgery, he says, and only mild irritation for several days following surgery.

“I look at myself now in a completely different way,” Robert says. “I feel like I have a lot of my confidence back. It’s going to get even better. I didn’t expect this kind of outcome from a single transplant session. I’ve gone from zero hairline to what you see now. I wore a hat every day for seven years, and I haven’t worn one since the day I got this surgery. It’s wonderful—and we’re only half done!”

For more information about Dr. Zacco and his anti-aging and aesthetic solutions, contact

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