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HEADQUARTERS OFFICE

1932 S. HALSTED ST., SUITE 413
CHICAGO, IL 60608 USA
TEL: +1-630-262-5399
U.S. TOLL FREE: 1-800-444-2737
FAX: +1-630-262-1520
INFO@ISHRS.ORG
www.ISHRS.ORG

CONSENSUS POSITION PAPER ON THE STANDARDS AND QUALIFICATIONS OF CARE AND THE GLOBAL RISE IN THE UNETHICAL AND ILLEGAL PRACTICE OF HAIR TRANSPLANTATION SURGERY

August 16, 2021

On behalf of the 1200 international members of the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery (ISHRS) and the member societies of the Global Council of Hair Restoration Surgery Societies (Global Council) representing the interest of its membership, we are writing to express the internationally accepted position on the qualifications for hair restoration surgery including those performing Follicular Unit Excision (FUE).

1. THE ISHRS AND THE GLOBAL COUNCIL

Established in 1993, the ISHRS is the largest non-profit medical society whose primary interest is in the study of hair restoration surgery, research, members education, public awareness, and the maintenance of ethical standards of practice.

The ISHRS is formally aligned with the following organizations:

- a) U.S. Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education
- b) European Committee for Standardization (Comite European de Normalisation/ CEN) as a liaison organization member of the task force on Aesthetic Surgery Services (CEN/TC 403)
- c) American Medical Association House of Delegates

The Global Council was formed in 2003 to help exchange views from representative physicians in the field of hair restoration from their respective national societies worldwide and to foster education and public awareness.

2. INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years our members have observed a rapid rise in illegal practices worldwide resulting in individuals performing surgeries resulting in disfiguring scars, unsightly hair lines, infected scalps and in some cases fatalities as a result of hair transplant surgery being performed by untrained and unscrupulous medical and non-medical personnel.

Pursuant to this dramatic global increase in the illicit and unethical practice of hair transplantation surgery, the ISHRS launched a global awareness campaign known as Fight The FIGHT (FIGHT = Fraudulent, Illicit, and Global Hair Transplants) in 2019.

Further to the campaign this position paper on hair transplantation surgery addressed to national health ministries and medical boards worldwide and their relevant governing bodies is aimed to assist them in developing policies to stem the rapid rise in the illegal and unethical practice of hair transplantation surgery.

3. POSITION AND STANDARDS

The position of the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery is that any procedure involving a skin incision for the purpose of tissue removal from the scalp or body, or to prepare the scalp or body to receive tissue, (e.g., incising the FUE graft, excising the donor strip, creating recipient sites) by any means, including robotics, is a surgical procedure. Such procedures must be performed by a properly trained and licensed physician. All FUE harvesting tools, including robotic devices, are considered extensions of the hand of the operator, and as such, all operators of these devices must be qualified physicians.

4. ASPECTS OF SURGERY SOLELY PERFORMED BY MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

Physicians who perform hair restoration surgery must possess the education, training, and current competency in the field of hair restoration surgery. The ISHRS and the Global Council believe the following aspects of hair restoration surgery should only be performed by physicians:

- a) Preoperative diagnostic evaluation
- b) Surgery planning and hair line design
- c) Surgery execution including donor hair harvesting, recipient site creation, use of sharp incision implanters, and Management of other patient medical issues and possible adverse reactions
- d) Post-operative care

5. ROLE OF SURGICAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS WHOSE SCOPE OF PRACTICE INCLUDES SURGERY

The ISHRS and Global Council recognize the delegation of the listed aspects of hair restoration procedures as follows in some countries for certain accredited health professional groups, for example:

- a) Physician Assistants (U.S.)
- b) Physician Associates (U.K.)
- c) Nurse Practitioners (U.S. and U.K.)
- d) Surgical Care Practitioners (U.K.)

The above are licensed to perform medical and surgical procedures under specific criteria. These health professionals are accountable to their licensing authority for unethical conduct. In these countries, the ISHRS recognizes that such professional groups are practicing legally, and the ISHRS approves of this as long as they are practicing within the scope of their license and under the supervision of a licensed physician who performs hair surgery and possesses the education, training, and current competency in the field of hair restoration surgery.

6. VISITING FOREIGN PRACTITIONERS

Many countries now have doctors flying in from other countries to perform surgeries. We have seen an explosion of the unlicensed practice of medicine by technicians in various parts of the world. The ISHRS and Global Council believe it is unethical, and in many cases illegal and unlawful for an individual to travel to a state and/or country in which he or she is not licensed to perform the surgical aspects of hair restoration.

7. HAIR TRANSPLANTATION TRAINING

Given the wide array of challenges that can arise during such complex procedures, physicians training and expertise allow them to substantively reduce the incidence of complications and to recognize and respond appropriately when such complications occur. Education is paramount and few training programs in the world offer hair restoration surgery. The ISHRS has been committed to providing most training workshops, educational courses and formal fellowship training programs to assure competency in the field. Additionally, the American Board of Hair Restoration Surgery (www.abhrs.org) also offers the International Board of Hair Restoration Surgery (IBHRS) Exam. The ISHRS holds in highest regard the standards and qualifications set by the ABHRS/IBHRS as the leading certification specific to the field of hair restoration surgery.

8. CLOSING SUMMARY

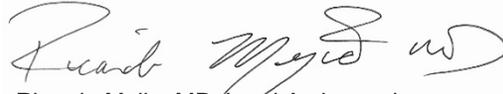
In closing, we wish to reiterate our commitment in informing the public and national public health officials through our campaign titled, "Fight the Fraudulent Illicit and Global Hair Transplants (FIGHT)" at fightthefight.ishrs.org. Worldwide, follicular unit excision has been undertaken by individuals who do not meet the above criteria, who fraudulently misrepresent the procedure and who do not have medical trained physicians or licensed individuals performing the surgery. We have seen an explosion of patient complications, inappropriate surgeries and hairlines, infections, poor results, disfigurements and in some cases even death. As patient advocates, our number one priority is the health and welfare of our patients.

We appeal respectfully to all health authorities and medical boards to consider these worldwide standards and issues when determining who is qualified to perform surgical hair restoration surgery including Follicular Unit Excision (FUE), and to be vigilant of this increasing threat to public health safety. For further information, please contact ISHRS Executive Director, Victoria Ceh, MPA at vceh@ishrs.org.

Sincerely,



Paul J. McAndrews MD, FISHRS, President
International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery



Ricardo Mejia, MD, Lead Ambassador
Global Council

With full support from the societies of the Global Council,



Samuel L. Lam, MD, FISHRS, President
American Board of Hair Restoration Surgery



M. Humayun Mohmand, MD, FISHRS, President
Asian Association of Hair Restoration Surgeons



Marco Barusco, MD, FISHRS, President
American Society of Hair Restoration Surgery



Russell Knudsen, MBBS, FISHRS, President
Australasian Society of Hair Restoration Surgery



Bruno Szyferman, MD, President
Argentine Society of Hair Recovery



Francisco Le Voci, MD, President
Brazilian Association of Hair Restoration Surgery





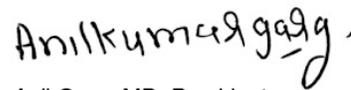
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British Association of Hair Restoration Surgery



Marie A. Schambach, MD, FISHRS, President
Ibero Latin American Society of Hair Transplantation



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German Society of Hair Restoration



Anil Garg, MD, President
Association of Hair Restoration Surgeons-India



Konstantinos Anastassakis, MD, PhD, President
Hellenic Academy of Hair Restoration Surgery



Piero Tesouro, MD, President
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Muhammad Nasir Rashid, MD, President
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Conradin von Albertini, MD, President
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Malgorzata Kolenda, MD, PhD, President
Polish Society of Hair Restoration Surgery



Rattapon Thuangtong, MD, President
Thai Society of Hair Restoration Surgeons



Ahmed Adel Noreldin, MD, FISHRS, President
Arab Association of Hair Transplantation

Shigeki Inui, MD, President
Japanese Society of Clinical Hair Restoration

Jufang Zhang, MD, President
China Association of Hair Restoration Surgery

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