



NIRI MAJUMDAR/DESIR NEWS

• Dr Cam Simmons: "The most successful hair transplant is one in which people don't notice you've had one!"

In some instances, our grandmothers didn't really know best.

Take hair loss, for example. How many times have you heard

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your grandmother intone that a good oil massage would give you a head full of thick, glossy hair?

Or that a diet rich in *glue* and almonds would?

Or that modern-day stresses were causing our hair to fall out?

Well, none of these are true. And it is not just anybody telling you this, but a physician with a background in Family and Emergency Medicine who has not only performed 5,000 hair transplants but has also had a hair transplant himself.

Dr Cam Simmons opened the Canadian Hair Transplant Centre (CHTC) in 2006 after

having worked as an associate at the Seager Hair Transplant Centre from 1999 to 2005.

He was drawn to the field after getting a hair transplant when he was 28.

"I enjoyed what it gave me. I've always enjoyed the surgical aspect of medicine, and doing hair transplants allows me to help others while being a surgeon and an artist," says Dr Simmons.

Asked if 28 was not kind of young for someone to go in for a hair transplant, he dispels the popular belief that only middle-aged men need one. At his clinic, he sees men in their late 20s to men in their 70s and even 80s.

"Of course, the demand peaks for men in their 30s to 50s and is not that common for men in their 70s and 80s, but we do see them!"

Currently, men outnumber women by eight to one, but that, says Dr Simmons, will change. In

the past, small circles of bald skin were removed and replaced with circles of hair-bearing skin. As women rarely go completely bald, it wasn't seen as something that was really helpful for them.

"Women also have the advantage of longer hair that they can style differently to cover/disguise thinning hair, but current methods of hair transplants work for both men and women. By the age of 50, fifty per cent of men and 40 per cent of women, would have experienced some degree of hair loss."

Much of this, Dr Simmons explains, will be genetic hair loss. Genetic, or hereditary hair loss, does not follow a simple pattern and is not as easy to explain as, say, a baby's brown eyes or blue eyes based on the colour of the parents' eyes. There are many genes involved that can affect different generations to different degrees.

Stress, diet, etc., do not really have a big impact on the most

Think of the human hair follicle as a little factory that makes hair. Each hair grows for two to six years and then falls out. The follicle then rests for a bit and then grows another hair. We normally shed 100 hair a day. What happens with genetic hair loss is that the new hair grows for a shorter period. For one to two years, instead of the two to six. And then, perhaps for six to nine months. So in effect, one loses more hair than is growing back.

There's not a lot that one can do for genetic hair loss.

"There are many so-called remedies out there, but only two, finasteride and minoxidil, have been proven to slow down hair loss. And even those can't generate new growth on bald areas," says Dr Simmons.

And oil massages really do not help?

"Not in genetic hair loss, no. Because hair loss is such a common problem and because people would really like to have a good

Hair we grow again!

common type of hair loss, androgenic alopecia, otherwise known as male pattern baldness and female pattern baldness. It is a universal condition and affects all races with all hair types. Over 95 per cent of hair loss sufferers have genetic hair loss.

The other kind of hair loss, telogen effluvium – that you and I might refer to as "I am shedding like crazy!" – the one in which one might find lots of hair on the brush, in the sink or in the shower, can be seen after major surgery or in women after childbirth, and can also be related to stress. Thyroid disease can cause loss of hair, as well.

"Usually, if the cause is remedied, hair that is shed will grow back in cases of telogen effluvium," says Dr Simmons. "But in androgenic alopecia, each generation of hair grows lighter, thinner and for a shorter period of time."

head of hair, they will try anything. I've had people come in and say they were told that if a cow licked their hair, it would grow back. This, of course, is nonsense!"

As Dr Simmons himself found, the one thing that works for sure is a hair transplant. He says it is economical in the long run and there's a lot less maintenance involved.

Though the CHTC does get referrals from physicians, anyone can call to make an appointment.

When they call, prospective clients are asked introductory questions to determine whether hair transplant is indeed an option. At the first session, apart from getting a brief medical background and examining the scalp, Dr Simmons looks at the causes of baldness in each case.

"We discuss options such as medication to slow hair loss, etc. We don't offer wigs, but that's an

option someone might wish to consider. After discussing the basic idea, we move on to a specific plan for each client. For me, it's very important to look at the long-term picture. Not only at what they will look like this year, but at what the future might hold, how they might expect to look 20 years down the road, because they will continue to lose hair..."

The initial consultation is free and often someone will take that information home to think things over a bit. Dr Simmons encourages those thinking about the process to call back or e-mail him with any questions or doubts that they might have. Sometimes, a second consultation might be scheduled.

Once a person makes up his or her mind, a date is fixed and after a brief medical check-up, one is all set for the transplant.

This is minor surgery, skin deep, and on a scale of one to 10 – with one being a mosquito bite and 10 being the worst pain you have experienced – Dr Simmons places the discomfort factor at not more than two or three. And that is just for the first 10 to 15 minutes, until the area becomes numb.

The length of surgery depends on the number of transplants required. For lowering a receding hair line, it can take up to 1500 grafts. For a full session of 3000 grafts for a large area of baldness – from the hairline to the top of the head – set aside a day.

"It can take eight to 12 hours and the client spends the day watching movies, listening to music, chatting with the staff. There are lunch and bathroom breaks. No one is knocked out, it's a light sedation to relax the client. Most people realize after the first couple of hours that nothing exciting is happening right now, and actually nap a little!"

Hair follicles are taken from the back and sides of the head, where most people have lots of hair, and transplanted to the top bald areas.

Though he's had men come in asking him to take some of

their wives' beautiful, thick hair, that is not an option as the body rejects skin from someone else.

"After an organ transplant, patients have to take very powerful medicines for the rest of their lives to suppress their immune systems to prevent rejection. This increases the risk of, among other things, cancer. Which is an acceptable risk for someone getting a new heart, but not for a hair transplant. In any case, one's own hair is better as it matches the rest of the hair in colour, thickness and wave."

Once it's done, the clients go home with a few simple post-op instructions to ensure they don't harm the grafts before they take. After this, it's mostly about waiting for hair to grow.

Which is, perhaps, the best part of the treatment as there is no sudden, dramatic change of appearance.

"For the first three to four months, the change is barely discernible. The hair grows back gradually over the next few months.

The most successful hair

transplant is one in which people don't notice you've had one!" says Dr Simmons.

So the next time you are with your grandmother, enjoy the loving massage but keep Dr Simmons' number handy if you are looking for that head of glossy, thick hair!

• Dr Cam Simmons can be reached at CHTC at 416-924-2482. For more information on hair loss, hair transplants and pricing, etc., visit www.chtc.ca.

The bald truth



• Dr Cam Simmons performing a hair transplant procedure

- Genetic hair loss can be inherited from either or both sides of the family.
- According to an international online survey, the majority of men with male pattern baldness (57%) would give up a prized personal possession (such as their stereo, cell phone, expensive car, laptop computer or even plasma TV) just to have more hair!
- While most women's hairlines remain unchanged throughout their lifetime, men's hairlines change or "mature" by receding as they age. As such, a 20-year-old man's hairline would look inappropriate and unnatural on a 50-year-old man.
- Contrary to popular myths, hair loss has nothing to do with wearing hats, or how often hair is washed, permed, or coloured. Similarly, shaving one's head won't strengthen hair either.
- Toronto has become an international centre for hair transplants – people travel from across the US and as far away as Europe to this city for hair restoration

- Artistry is a key factor in making a hair transplant look natural. The hairline must be created to suit the patient's face and age, so a great deal of attention must be paid to the design of the frontal hairline. "A patient's hairline actually creates a frame for the face," explains Dr. Simmons, who developed a unique system to help surgeons design male temporal hairlines. "So it is imperative to find a surgeon who can create a hairline that will be age-appropriate for the long term and one that compliments the patient's face as best as possible. It's an art that requires a lot of skill."
- While every patient has his or her own reasons for getting a hair transplant, according to Dr. Simmons, the following are the most popular reasons why he has seen men get hair transplants:
 - oo Their appearance is important to them and they want to look as young and energetic as they feel.
 - oo They want to look and feel their best in

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relationships, whether that is preparing for an arranged marriage or for dating.

oo They want to get their competitive edge back in the business world; perhaps with a new job or promotion

What to look for in a hair transplant doctor

Dr. Simmons suggests asking the following questions when you're choosing a surgeon for a hair transplant:

How many surgeries have you performed personally?

How experienced is your staff and what is their role and yours in the surgery itself?

May I speak to some of your patients for references?

Do you have professional certification?

Dr. Simmons suggests choosing a reputed doctor with experience, considering the level and years of experience of the support staff, the quality of patient care, and talking to the doctor about designing the hair line and considering long term planning – such as how the

transplant will frame your face as you age, etc.

“This is a very important decision, so ultimately you want to be comfortable with your hair transplant team, feel their commitment to you and their passion for hair transplantation,” says Dr. Simmons.

The Canadian Hair Transplant Centre has made a commitment to being the best in the profession.

What makes it unique is it focuses on three hair transplant cornerstones:

1. ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS AND PLANNING – Dr. Simmons concentrates on the long-term effects of a hair transplant with a long-term plan.

2. COMMITMENT TO SKILLED ARTISTRY – specializing in hair transplant artistry, Dr. Simmons has an exclusive method of developing a natural-looking hairline to compliment a patient's appearance as they age (for 30-50+ years).

3. LEADING TECHNOLOGY – CHTC uses the profession's most

advanced scientific technology to produce optimum results.

About Dr Simmons

Dr. Simmons is one of only 100 Diplomats of American Board of Hair Restoration Surgery, the highest level of certification in the field of hair transplantation. He has contributed to the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgeons meetings and has also published articles in hair transplant journals and contributed to textbooks within the field. He also co-authored part of the anesthetic section of the textbook *Hair Transplantation* by Walter Unger. Dr. Simmons is a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, the Ontario and Canadian Medical Associations, the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery and the American Board of Hair Restoration Surgery. At the Canadian Hair Transplant Centre, Dr. Simmons has assembled some of the profession's most talented staff for his transplant team.

– With files from KEKA DASGUPTA