

The Follicular Family Unit

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I want to congratulate Dr. David Seager on the "Follicular Family Unit."¹

I do not entirely agree with all his suggested applications of the concept, but, appreciating this concept will help us and our technicians to better understand the follicular units, their relationship to each other, and how and when to separate them.

One reason that I found the article so intriguing is that it helped to solve a mystery I had in my office or at least it helped me confirm a solution that I had already reached. For some time I have noted how some technicians consistently get more grafts out of the same amount of strip than others. Random quality checks failed to reveal any significant difference except the technician with the most grafts had a tendency for smaller grafts, otherwise, the grafts of each technician were always close to perfect. In discussions with technicians the problem of where to divide follicles came up. The technician who cut fewer and larger follicles said she would treat questionable units as one unit to avoid breaking up a

unit and perhaps damaging one. This problem is more common with very dense hair. I did some cutting on dense hair, and it is commonly not at all obvious where one follicle stops and others begin. This is particularly true at the mid- and lower levels of the follicles. To illustrate, I recently got some excellent photos of slivers (see photo). Note how the units are obvious at the surface and become less clearly defined deeper in the dermis.

It is amazing how much more sophisticated and scientific we have become in our discussions and in our technique since we have adopted the microscope and recognized the follicular unit.

Follicular Unit — A Moral Issue

I am disturbed because there are many who haven't embraced the microscope and the follicular unit concept. I understand this at first because it is a big commitment of time, money, and personnel. But, as the evidence continues to pile up, the rush to adopt it in its full context is still slow. I believe another reason, and perhaps even more important, is that many still don't understand and appreci-

ate the full meaning and importance of the concept. I have wondered how to better get this across and I think I have found the answer. One must first, without reservations, accept the follicular unit as a complete physiological and anatomic entity. I think most pay lip service to the concept but they do not completely understand and accept its significance. If they did they could not morally perform hair transplants another way.

We have gotten away with it for years because we mistakenly felt that there was so much donor hair and we were not sure or would not admit that we were destroying it. But there isn't that much donor hair! We have all watched it disappear over the years.

Every hair follicle is precious, we should save, preserve, and protect each one. ■

Reference

1. Seager D. Dense hair transplantation from sparse donor area — Introducing the "Follicular Family Unit"; *Hair Transplant Forum* Jan-Feb 1998; vol 8: 21-23.

The Perfect Sliver. Note how the units are separate at the surface and closer together in the dermis.



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