

Scalp Micropigmentation

A Useful Treatment for Hair Loss

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KEYWORDS

• Scalp micropigmentation • Medical tattoo • Balding or thinning hair

KEY POINTS

- SMP is a medical tattoo application for balding or thinning hair.
- SMP is a permanent concealer that reduces the color contrast between hair and scalp.
- SMP can be used for men or women with thinning hair.
- SMP can be used as an adjunct to hair transplantation.
- SMP can be used as a styling solution for a balding man who is willing to shave his scalp.
- SMP is an art form and requires a good understanding of the instability of the balding process.
- SMP can create extremely happy or unhappy patients so it is critical to fully implement informed consent.
- SMP is very effective for the treatment of scalp scars of almost any cause.

INTRODUCTION

A concealer is a product applied to the scalp to reduce the visual contrast between the color of the hair and the color of the skin. This procedure can be done by darkening the skin with powders, pastes, or paint-like substances, thickening the hair shafts with a keratin-like material or dyeing the hair to bring its color closer to the color of the scalp. Concealers are used by men and women with thinning hair or genetic patterned balding. The tattoo, when applied to the scalp, becomes a type of permanent concealer. The first recorded medical use for a tattoo as a concealer was published by Traquina¹ in 2001 but its use was crude and quite detectable. The refinement of the process, called scalp micropigmentation (SMP), requires that the tattoo pigment be placed in microdots of less than 1 mm in size and 1 mm apart, similar to the distance between follicular units evident on a shaved scalp.

SMP is like a stippled painting and it is an art form. The placement distance and the size of the

pigment dots vary with the targeted goals of the surgeon (artist) and the patient. Although it is initially thought that the mathematical density of the dots for SMP should approximate the follicular unit density, in the authors' earlier experience,^{2,3} we have since come to realize that the actual distribution of dots is not a purely mathematical constant tied to the follicular unit density of a particular patient. When used to address deformities of the hair and scalp, it is found that the pigment must be blended with the blemishes and scars found in the patients. What needs to be done is based on the "soft" requirements of the art form that best defines the dot size, density, and color of the pigment. The intensity of the dots and how they are worked on the scalp give shade and texture to the area being addressed. The requirement for each area of the scalp may vary based on many factors, including the following:

- a. Presence of scars and/or hair
- b. Smoothness of the scalp
- c. Color of the skin and hair

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