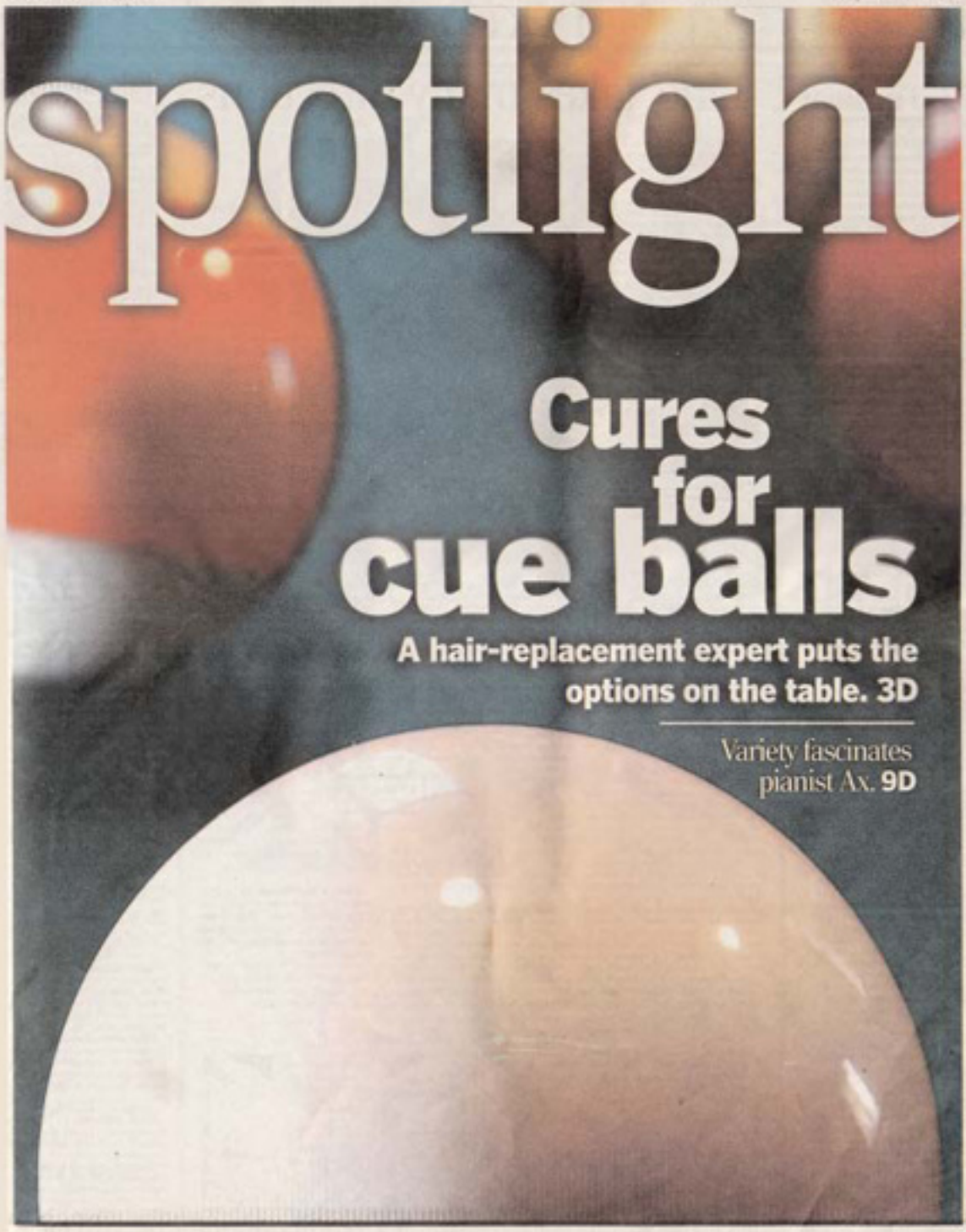


spotlight

Cures for cue balls

A hair-replacement expert puts the
options on the table. 3D

Variety fascinates
pianist Ax. 9D



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Making headway



Headwork
Can you identify the owners of these famous bald pates? The answers are on page 4D.

Exploring the latest advances in hair replacement

By Mark Wolf, Rocky Mountain News
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I don't understand why I got this assignment. Luck of the draw, I'm guessing. It could just as easily have been "Power Wallpapering" or even "Chapped Lips: The Rough Kiss of Winter."

But a new book on hair replacement dropped onto my desk, and people here were quick to think it was a fine fit for me.

Surely they don't think I'm losing my hair. Well, maybe if I tilt my head this one way and the sun hits it at just the right angle, you might mistake the shadowy tricks of light for the illusion that my hair is fleeing

my head faster than inhibitions at the office holiday party!

Fact is, I have plenty of thick hair on my head - on the sides of my head, where it serves as a dust ruffle for the thin quilt above. What's left on top is pushed artfully around into what poses as maximum coverage, although it's a bit like a defensive back trying to cover three receivers at once. When I don't wear a hat at night, my scalp shows up on NASA's satellite scans.

So there I was, sitting in the office of Dr. James Harris, author of *The Hair Replacement Revolution: A Consumer's Guide to Effective Hair Replacement*

Techniques (Square One Publishing, \$16.95). And here's what we talked about:

Myths about hair loss abound.

The biggest one is that clogged pores cause hair loss, says Harris, a transplant surgeon in private practice and clinical instructor in hair transplantation at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. "There's no basis in fact for that, or from wearing a hat too much or too little."

And don't necessarily blame your mom's side of the family, either.

"Both sides contribute equally. It's not uncommon to see someone who's balding whose mom's side (of the family) has no hair

Hair: Baldness and psychology

loss at all. I think my dad started that rumor to blame it on someone else rather than his side of the family."

Another myth is that if a guy with thinning hair shaves his head, it will grow back thicker.

"I hear that all the time," Harris said. "It's deceptive. It feels like it comes back thicker, because it's bristly. Once you get any length on it, it's just like it was before."



**Harris says
don't blame
your mom.**

It's no joke: Hair loss bums guys out.

Harris recently lectured on the psychology of hair loss at a conference in New York.

"It can be hard for patients to make a rational decision," he said. "A lot of people felt like it's no big deal. People will tell

them, 'You look OK with it,' but when a patient looks in the mirror, he has a sense of something lost, something that's missed. I think it brings to light eventual aging and eventual death. It's very personal."

And he's not the only one saying it.

Thomas Cash, a psychology professor at Old Dominion University, has studied and done surveys on male hair loss.

"The expression bad hair day is testimony to the psychological importance of hair," Cash wrote in the professional journal *Clinics in Dermatology* in 2001. "Men who are uninvolved in a romantic relationship may be at greater psychological risk. They feel that their attractiveness is diminishing and worsening their chances for dating and mating."

As for those infomercials on late-night TV for spray-on stuff . . .

"Some of these products that help cover the scalp work really well," Harris said. "I have a patient who walked into my office and looked like he had a full head of hair. Then he washed it off and he had half the hair I did. He spends 2 1/2 hours on it every morning. Some of them work pretty well, but it's a huge time commitment."

If I'm not ready to jump into a transplant, how about a hairpiece?

"They're improving the adhesive and the undetectability of them, which used to be a huge factor," said Harris. "They're trying to match the hairpiece to a person's age a little better and not make every person with a hairpiece look like they're 20 years old."

The surgeries

■ The most common hair-transplant operations are mini- and micro-grafting and follicular-unit transplant. In both procedures, hair is taken from the back or side of the head and implanted in small units. Mini- and micro-grafting uses grafts containing three to 12 hairs (mini) or one or two hairs (micro). In a follicular-unit procedure, grafts are separated into bundles (follicular units) typically containing one to four hair follicles and the connecting tissue.

What about medication?

"With Propecia (active ingredient: finasteride), if you look at the crown, it works on 99 percent of men. Of those, 65 percent will notice hair loss stops, and 34 percent will get growth of new hair back there. It's the best thing we have. If we catch someone who's young and just starting to panic, I'll recommend Propecia. There's a very good chance of stopping the loss and giving someone a chance to think about how they're going to proceed," he said.

What's on the horizon?

"The most promising new methodology out there is kind of a biotech surgical method called cell multiplication," Harris said. "It takes cells out of the back of your scalp, separating them using microsurgery, placing them in a petri dish and growing as many cells as you want.

"You take those cells in a solution and just inject them back into the scalp like they're seeds. Theoretically, wherever you plant these seeds, you get a new follicle to grow.

"They're doing phase-one clinical trials in the United Kingdom, and hopefully within the next year they may start clinical trials in the United States. Predictions are that within five or 10 years, it will be a reality.

"Eventually it's the most cost-effective way we have to get hair on someone's head. Right now the surgery we have, as elegant as it is, is very time-consuming and labor-intensive."

So if I opt for a permanent replacement, either a mini- or micro-transplant or the follicular-unit transplant (see sidebar), which Harris performs, how much hair can I evict from the sides and relocate to the top?

"One of the misconceptions about surgery is that you take it from here (the sides of the head) and it grows back. They don't understand it's an exhaustible supply," said Harris. "If you have less baldness, you can do more with that donor hair. Everybody has about 6,000 to 7,000 grafts available to them. My job is to educate the patients on what may be reasonable options."

And how much will it cost?

Harris' book says that mini- and micro-grafts cost from \$3 to \$15 per graft and that follicular-unit grafts cost from \$3 to \$12 each. The number of grafts in a follicular-unit procedure will typically be higher.

"An average number for one person to get coverage in the front of their scalp can run from \$5,000 to \$10,000 in a session. On average, follicular-unit transplant takes two sessions. That can get you pretty close to a pretty full density that almost matches what you have on the sides of your head," he said.

Who's a good transplant candidate?

"About 99 percent of all men with hair loss are candidates for surgical hair transplantation. Bad candidates are very young men who have unrealistic expectations, and there's the rare case of a man who doesn't have an adequate donor area.

"The No. 1 reason you shouldn't have one is that your expectations are too high, you're not aware of the supply and demand. If you have realistic expectations and adequate donor reserves, you can create something on the top of someone's head that serves his needs pretty well."

We've been talking about my own hair off and on. Finally he asks whether I'm comfortable with my hair loss. What I want to say is that I'm pretty much OK with it, once the sporadic sobbing subsides.

"My hair was your hair when I had my transplant five years ago and I was about 40," Harris said. "Even though your baldness pattern is big, your expectations aren't to look like you did 30 years ago."

At least Mother Nature dealt me one good hand.

"Your hair color, people with gray, red, blond hair, gives better coverage in one session. When you look at my head (his hair is dark), your eye detects very easily the contrast between skin and hair. You will have less contrast with your hair color."