



# SUNDAY TIMES



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## The rising: Shots boost hair growth

Malathy Iyer | TNN

**Mumbai:** It's a hair-raising claim. Hyderabad-based doctor couple Debraj Shome and Rinky Kapoor claims that their home-grown invention, QR 678, could arrest the most stubborn cases of hairfall. Balding could be a thing of the past, says Dr Kapoor, a dermatologist attached to Apollo Hospital.

According to the duo, their invention called QR 678 entailed four years of research as it went through various stages of development in the laboratories of Tata Memorial Hospital, IIT-Bombay and Apollo Hospital in Hyderabad. "If there is no research paper on it yet," says Dr Shome, "it is only because we have still not patented the molecule, which is basically a mix of many growth factors."

The doctors' 700-odd patient pool, each of whom has undergone five to eight shots of Rs 5,000 each, has generated much word-of-mouth publicity for the new technique. Indipop singer Anaida

### BYE-BYE HAIR TRANSPLANT?



**SINGER ANAIDA** says she was miserable after noting massive hairfall. She began taking QR 678 shots three months ago and is happy with the 'extra volume'. "I took the first shot in Singapore when I was told that the drug was imported from Hyderabad."

is only one of the celebs from Mumbai who zips across to Charminar city every three weeks for a shot.

Haircare is big business in India. Plastic surgeon Dr S Keswani feels hair transplant is the fastest growing sector, second only to liposuction, in India's cosmetic

► **GROWTH FACTOR SHOTS:** A Hyderabad-based doctor couple injects growth factors into the scalp to reduce hairfall. Prepared with scientists of IIT-Bombay, QR 678 is yet to be patented. Five to eight sessions, costing Rs 5,000 each, of multiple, tiny injections may be needed

► **STEM CELL INJECTIONS:** A Mumbai doctor delivers injections of stem cells derived from human fatty tissues. Two shots costing Rs 25,000-plus are needed three months apart. The cost jumps four times if a patient wants own stem cell to be harvested

surgery charts. Not surprisingly then, any new promise of hairfall control or growth is lapped up. Apart from the QR 678, doctors now also offer stem cell therapy to rescue one's crowning glory.

► QR 678 research began in Kharghar, P 7

# Hairfall research took root in Tata hosp's Kharghar unit

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**D**ermatologist Dr Satish Bhatia, who practises out of his Cooperage clinic, started the European treatment around three months ago. "Stem cells are known to take on the role of skin (or hair), bone and muscle. We use stem cells derived from fatty tissues that already know their role and won't grow into tumours," he says. His concoction is imported from Italy, costing Rs 25,000. "If the patient wants his/her own stem cells to be derived from his/her own fat cells, then the cost goes up four times," he adds.

Dr Bhatia believes growth factors and stem cells are the next big things in hair care. "People are sick of hair transplants, which have a bushy appearance and look artificial. One of 10 persons undergoing a transplant complains of side-effects such as swelling and infection. So stem cell injections that cause local swelling and redness for only 48 hours are welcome," he adds. So, how do the new technologies work? According to the doctors, they release the body's basic engineering unit—read proteins—to coax hair growth.

Hair works on a biochemical rhythm. Hair follicles grow on the interactions between the dermis and epi-

## Surgical

**H**air Transplant: Small pieces of hair-bearing scalp from the back of the head are 'transplanted' to balding spots. Doctors take small portion of the scalp from either the back or side of the head and move them into the 'slits' on the top of the head. This is called hair grafting, punch grafting, plug grafting or hair transplantation. At times, doctors transfer flaps—a larger portion—to the balding areas.

## Patient-Speak

**H**airfall can be traumatic, more so for a person in showbiz. Singer Anaida knows the feeling too well: Over the years, she realised she was suffering massive hairfall. "I tried several therapies, even using minoxidil," she said. But none helped. She then heard about mesotherapy (injecting medicines into scalp) in a Singapore spa. "I was surprised to hear them say they had imported the drug from Apollo Hospital in Hyderabad," she said. Her treatment with QR678 is more than half way through. "But I can feel my hair growing thicker." Isn't she worried about side-effects? "Doctors assured me it doesn't even get into the bloodstream," she said.

dermis (the two layers of the skin). "Factors from the hair root shoot signals that are instrumental in the three-stage growth of each hair. The signalling is done by the network of capillaries surrounding the base of the hair follicle that delivers the nutrients—amino acids, vitamins, minerals—necessary for proper functioning," say Dr Kapoor and Dr Shome. It is this bio-

## Non-Surgical

**H**air Additions: This is an hair-bearing contraption that is added to the existing hair or scalp to give a "fuller head of hair" appearance. These additions could be in the form of hair weaves, hair extensions, hair pieces, toupees, non-surgical hair replacements, partial hair prostheses, hair wefts etc.



chemical signal that the duo claim to have developed.

The QR 678 story began in Tata Memorial Hospital's Kharghar research unit. "We were researching the use of nano-particles to cure retinoblastoma, a cancer of the retina. After injecting the particles near the eyes of mice, we found that hair around the eyes had fallen, suggesting that local factors could play a role," said Dr

Shome. He felt that the reverse—local factors triggering hair growth—could also work.

But to isolate one of the hundreds of local protein growth factors that caused hair growth or hair loss was a mammoth task. "Over 18 months, we identified five growth factors and, with the help of IIT-B scientists, synthesised different compositions and proportions," said Dr Kapoor.

A pilot trial among 25 cancer patients with hair loss showed growth. "Thereafter, bigger trials showed over 80% hair growth in about six months in over 90% patients who tried this injection therapy," said the doctors. Over 700 persons have already undergone QR 678 therapy.

Plastic surgeon Dr R Rajput, who specializes in hair transplants, feels that the new methodologies—be it stem cells or epidermal growth factors—have a role to play in hair regeneration. "These methods can only help patients who are not bald. They can have a thinning hairline, but if their hair roots are dead, then there is no technology that can revive it," he says.

The duo, however, claims that their concoction works even on those who have been bald for a while, provided there are some microscopic hair still present in the follicles.