



# Growing it out

**PEPPER LEE** finds out more about a pioneering treatment for hair loss, and the man who has brought it to Singapore

It wasn't a coincidence that last Tuesday's official opening of the Electro Hair Regeneration (EHR) Centre at Camden Medical Centre fell on the Anglo-Chinese School's (ACS) founder's day. Dr Eugene Hong of EHR Centre is a loyal ex-ACS boy, and a founder in his own right. His EHR Centre is a pioneer in the region, being the first and only centre to offer ElectroTrichoGenesis (ETG) treatment as a therapy for hair loss. The treatment — which American researchers have claimed to have a 96 per cent success rate — is documented in the International Journal of Dermatology as a non-invasive, medically-proven solution for hair loss.

The treatment works via immersing patients' heads in ETG electric fields, using a hood which sends out repeated electrostatic pulses to the scalp. Patients sit under this hood for 12 minutes per session, which is entirely painless.

As Dr Hong explains: "At least 10 weekly sessions will be needed for patients to see a decrease in hair loss. And within 36 weeks, patients should be able to witness some hair growth."

That said, Dr Hong stresses that ETG is "a treatment, not a cure". While this therapy may promise to cover up that bald patch in 36 weeks, it does not seek to alter one's genetic predisposition to baldness, nor cure any hair-threatening medical ailments, so to speak.

"More often than not, the problem is caused by genetics," says Dr Hong. "But there are many other causes — medical ailments like anaemia, treatments like chemotherapy, and even stress — all lead to balding problems."

The 33-year-old doctor, who was previously from the Parkway Group Healthcare, started hair loss for personal reasons. With both his parents suffering from hair loss problems, he realised that balding could "add about 7 to 10 years to one's age" and cause one to suffer from "low self-esteem".

He also found that oral medication available in the market sometimes had adverse side effects like "decreasing sexual performance", while certain creams caused him to "develop scalp rashes." It was only after several unpleasant encounters with off-the-shelf products that Dr Hong finally came across ETG treatment in a medical journal.

Excited about the documented success of ETG — 86 per cent of clinical trial participants reported hair growth after treatment — Dr Hong met up with re-

market the treatment in Asia. While his centre in Singapore started operation only in October last year, Dr Hong already has grand plans to expand. He hopes to open another centre in Singapore, "probably in the Shenton Way district so that treatment is hassle-free for working professionals."

He also reveals that his centre in Japan will open later this month, with plans underway for more centres in "Australia, Thailand and Hong Kong."

Big plans indeed for a service targeted at a niche audience — after all, even the rich will feel the pinch of a hefty \$250 per 14-minute treatment. However, Dr Hong remains adamant that factors like "self-esteem, confidence" are priceless, and that "men and women alike are realising that their balding problem may be hindering their performance, whether in the



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social sense, or in their jobs." Cheaper options in the market, like the use of herbal remedies or topical application, may use alluring before-after photographs as their selling point. But Dr Hong points out that "most of these photographs show patients with coin-like bald patches, which point to a condition called alopecia areata. This condition is temporary, and often corrects itself within 18 months, even without additional treatment."

What sets the EHR Centre apart is the documented science behind its treatment, and its motto of being "effective, proven, and safe". For people worried about side effects arising from continuous exposure to electrostatic fields, Dr Hong explains: "The radiation from treatment is not significant — it is 50,000 times lower than the radiation you get from a mobile phone!"