



PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR HAIR TRANSPLANT SURGICAL ASSISTANTS



BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF HAIR RESTORATION SURGERY (BAHRS) PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR HAIR TRANSPLANT SURGICAL ASSISTANTS

(JANUARY 2019)

INTRODUCTION AND THE STATUS OF HAIR TRANSPLANT SURGICAL ASSISTANTS IN THE UK IN 2019

The British Association of Hair Restoration Surgeons (now British Association of Hair Restoration Surgery - BAHRS) was founded in 1996 following the creation of the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery (ISHRS) in 1993. From 1996 – 2013 BAHRS was an association for Hair Transplant Surgeons only but in July 2013 the membership agreed to extend the remit of BAHRS to include, amongst others, Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants. This was in recognition of the pivotal role they play in the hair transplant procedure and to encourage communication and collegiality similar to that which occurs within the ISHRS.

BAHRS has chosen the term 'Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant' to describe individuals who assist the Hair Transplant Surgeon during the course of a hair transplant procedure. There are many other commonly used terms to describe this role such as hair technician, hair transplant assistant, hair tech, surgical assistant, surgical tech etc. BAHRS has used the term 'Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant' to differentiate the role from more traditional 'surgical assistants'.

Whilst the Professional Standards for Cosmetic Practice document published by The Royal College of Surgeons of England in January 2013 recommends that "only licensed doctors, registered dentists and registered nurses should provide any cosmetic treatments (including laser treatments and injectable cosmetic treatments)" - and by extrapolation assisting in hair transplant surgery - the BAHRS and the International Society for Hair Restoration Surgery (ISHRS) acknowledge that Hair Transplant procedures, and in particular Follicular Unit Transplants by the strip method, require a team of Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants who do not need to hold one of these qualifications.

In the original BAHRS Constitution one of the aims was to advance all aspects of the professional practice of hair restoration surgery to high standards of competence, conduct and ethics and to promote education in appropriate skills. This is applicable to both Hair Transplant Surgeons and Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants and remains a key objective of the revised Constitution.

Another aim of the BAHRS Constitution is to represent members, to assist members to protect their interests, and to offer them support in matters relating to hair restoration surgery practice. Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants come from a wide variety of backgrounds, some with healthcare training (such as Nurses and Dental Technicians) but many without. Prior to July 2013 there was no organisation within the UK to which Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants could apply for professional membership.



Prior to August 2013 there were also no Professional Standards for Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants in the UK and no Code of Conduct for Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants.

There is no recognised training for Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants in the UK nor are there any formal qualifications required to be a Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant. Individual Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants are usually trained by other Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants or by Hair Transplant Surgeons but the duration and structure of training varies widely from individual to individual.

Royal College of Surgeons Surgical Assistants – College Position Statement in 2011¹ stated “The work of surgical assistants must be properly supervised, monitored and appraised, and must involve surgeons from the relevant departments. Surgical assistants – as with all members for the surgical team - must not work outside their sphere of competence and training. Extending practice beyond the defined clinical remit poses risks to patient safety.”

Following the publication of the Review of the Regulation of Cosmetic Interventions by the Department of Health (under the leadership of Professor Sir Bruce Keogh) in April 2013² there is the recognition of a need for greater levels of regulation in all areas of cosmetic practice. It is therefore timely for BAHRS to clarify the roles of Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants and the professional standards expected of those individuals who are Full Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant members

The BAHRS Professional Standards for Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants will be transparent and available for public viewing. All BAHRS Full Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant Members and Affiliate Members who are Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants will commit to adhering to these standards by signing the BAHRS Code of Conduct applicable to them. Failure to adhere to the BAHRS Professional Standards for Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants would result in expulsion from the Association.

All BAHRS Hair Transplant Surgeon members acknowledge that the Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants who work with them are under their supervision and that the Hair Transplant Surgeon is responsible to the patient for ensuring that the quality of care, skill and expertise of the Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant is at a level that complies with the British Association of Hair Restoration Professional Standards for Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants.

DEFINITIONS RELEVANT TO BAHRS

BAHRS Full Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant Members as defined in the Association’s Constitution are those members who are Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants and who are employed (i.e. have an employer-employee relationship as recognized by law, and the employment is full-time or permanent part-time (as opposed to an independent contractor, partner, part-time, or temporary service provider, or any other business relationship) directly by a Hair Transplant Surgeon who is a BAHRS Full Medical Member or by a Hair Transplant Clinic that also employs a Hair Transplant Surgeon who is a BAHRS Full Medical Member and who supervises them.

BAHRS Affiliate Members (Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants) as defined in the Association's Constitution are those Hair Transplant Surgical Assistants who are not employed as above.

The Professional Standards for Cosmetic Practice Working Party³ defined 'cosmetic surgery/practice' and 'aesthetic surgery/practice' as: "Operations and all other invasive medical procedures where the primary aim is the change, the restoration, normalisation or improvement of the appearance, the function and well-being at the request of an individual". This definition can be applied to Hair Transplant Surgery.

The Royal College of Surgeons does not have an explicit definition for 'surgery'. BAHRS considers any hair transplant procedure (including Follicular Unit Excision – FUE) to be a surgical procedure.

The Professional Standards for Cosmetic Practice³ document categorised cosmetic procedures as:

- **Level 1a: Invasive** Medium–high risk; may require general anaesthetic; may require an overnight stay
- **Level 1b: Invasive** Low–medium risk, usually only requires local anaesthetic, out-patient
- **Level 2: Minimally invasive** Lower risk, usually non-permanent/reversible, day case, local anaesthetic if any.

Hair Transplant Surgery would be defined as **Level 1b: Invasive** according to this classification.

Hair Transplant Surgery is performed almost exclusively outside the NHS. Therefore, apart from a small number of pro-bono cases, this document assumes that patients will be paying for their surgery.

STANDARDS FOR HAIR TRANSPLANT SURGICAL ASSISTANTS

A Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant would not attempt to function independently or make clinical decisions regarding a patient's care without the knowledge of the Hair Transplant Surgeon they work with.

A Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant must not perform surgical steps of the procedure (including making Follicular Unit Excision (FUE) incisions, removing the Strip Follicular Unit Transplant donor strip, making recipient site incisions including by the use of sharp implanters, or supervising robotic devices making incisions).

A Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant may perform non-surgical steps of the procedure including assisting the Hair Transplant Surgeon with surgical steps, removing follicular unit grafts that have been incised by the Hair Transplant Surgeon or doctor-supervised robotic device, processing/trimming follicular unit grafts, implanting follicular unit grafts into incisions made by a doctor (or doctor-supervised robotic device) with forceps, blunt implanters or other blunt instruments/devices.

A Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant will ensure that they have the same level of occupational health clearance that would be required if they were working in the NHS or a private hospital facility.

A Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant will have Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance - previously the remit of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) – or will have CRB clearance.



A Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant will reassure themselves that their place of work is Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered and approved.

A Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant will reassure themselves that the Full Medical Member or the Organisation that employs them has processes in place for dealing with concerns and complaints raised by patients.

A Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant should participate in and be aware of audits regarding the Hair Transplant practice they work in.

A Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant will ensure that they are covered by indemnity insurance that is adequate for the Hair Transplant procedures that they assist with.

QUALIFICATIONS, TRAINING EXPERIENCE AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

A Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant Member will submit all qualifications to BAHRS upon submission of their application form.

A Hair Transplant Surgical Member will have completed Basic Life Support training.

A Hair Transplant Surgical Assistant will keep themselves up to date with developments in hair transplant by reading relevant publications and discussions with colleagues.

APPENDIX (all references cited January 2019)

- 1) Surgical Assistants – College Position Statement – Royal College of Surgeons 2011
<https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/library-and-publications/rcs-publications/docs/rcs-position-statement-surgical-assistants/>
- 2) Review of the Regulation of Cosmetic Interventions – Department of Health Keogh Report, 2013
<http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-regulation-of-cosmetic-interventions>
- 3) Professional Standards for Cosmetic Practice – Royal College of Surgeons, 2016
<https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/standards-and-research/standards-and-guidance/service-standards/cosmetic-surgery/professional-standards-for-cosmetic-surgery/>