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AI and Hair Loss: Measuring Progress with Data-Driven Insights

Announcer:

You're listening to *Clinician's Roundtable* on ReachMD. On this episode, we'll discuss advancements in artificial intelligence for hair loss management with Dr. Maria Hordinsky. Dr. Hordinsky is the R.W. Goltz Professor and Vice Chair of Research in the Department of Dermatology at the University of Minnesota and spoke on this topic at the 2025 AAD Annual Meeting. Let's hear from her now.

Dr. Hordinsky:

There have been AI tools available for dermatologists for a few years now, and there are two major systems that have been used—primarily in clinical research and to some degree in patient care—but that's all changing right now because our patients and consumers can go to Amazon, and they can purchase a lot of different devices that give you incredible information, which they then bring to the clinic and ask their dermatologist or whoever they're seeing, "Well, what is this?" and "What is that?" and "What is that redness?" and "What does this all mean?"

So basically, there are two major devices that have been used for the past few years in clinical research and now more and more in direct patient care. One device uses AI technology and allows one to put a virtual tattoo on the scalp of patients, so everyone can choose where they want that virtual tattoo placed. In our case, we put the tattoo in six different regions of the scalp. So we put a virtual tattoo in the frontal hairline, the mid scalp, the vertex region, both temples, and the mid occipital scalp. And again, those are all placed using technology and measurements. So in our case, we used the measurements starting from the glabella and moving backwards on the scalp.

So why is that all important? Well, one of the challenges in treating hair loss conditions is that if you have patients who have chronic hair shedding, they rarely feel like they're doing well. Everything is not going well. There's more hair shedding. It's worse, it's worse, it's worse. So it's very nice to have quantitative data that one can actually measure. And so we now do that routinely and follow patients longitudinally so when the patient comes back at their six-month visit or their 12-month visit and they continue to say, "You know, I'm still not doing well; this is not going in the right direction," we can get this quantitative data and measurements.

So what do we get out of the technology? We get the total number of hair fibers that are present in those regions. We obtain the diameter of those fibers, because as patients are treated, the numbers may stay fairly constant, but the quality of the hair fiber might improve with whatever therapy the patient is on. And so for the patient to see longitudinally that their numbers are stable or the quality of the hair fiber is improving is actually very rewarding and has really, "to some degree," revolutionized the management of the hair loss patient. So these devices are available, and more dermatologists are obtaining this particular device.

There's another one that is used more in clinical research trials that allows you to monitor each particular hair fiber. That technology allows you to really focus on new hairs as they come in as well, and that technology also gives you information about hair diameter and hair numbers.

I think AI is just going to become part of what we do every day, but one has to make the investment of time, energy, and effort to learn how to do it, and then just like with everything else in the world we live in, to be able to change as the technology improves and to be able to handle what our patients are able to buy on Amazon and bring to us in clinic. They're bringing us really good pictures. When they come to clinic, they tell us they took the picture like a week ago. Well, that's great. The scalp changes very quickly, so one really in the future is going to need to have a better link to what the consumer or patient can do at home compared to what we are able to do in the clinic and guide the patient to success.

Announcer:

That was Dr. Maria Hordinsky discussing advancements in artificial intelligence for hair loss management. To access this and other episodes in our series, visit *Clinician's Roundtable* on ReachMD.com, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks for listening!