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## **Hairstylists as Screeners**

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**By Haley Fulton**

MD CANDIDATE, CLASS OF 2023 - UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE GREENVILLE

Reviewed by Ronda Farah, MD

Central centrifugal cicatricial alopecia (CCCA) is the most common subtype of scarring alopecia that affects African American women. Like many other forms of scarring hair loss, there are genetic and environmental factors that increase one's likelihood of developing CCCA. CCCA develops insidiously, making it more difficult to spot as small progressions are not always apparent to the affected person. However, the sooner scarring alopecia is recognized, the better as early intervention is key to having the best outcomes for patients.

One study conducted found that 21% of women were alerted about their alopecia by their hairstylist. Most hairstylists receive some training in cosmetology school about warning signs for various pathologies including melanoma and alopecia. However, seeing a dermatologist is imperative to disease management. Most women see their hairdresser more often than they routinely see a dermatologist. Therefore, a study was conducted to explore if increased education on alopecia would help stylists feel more comfortable making recommendations for clients to visit a dermatologist.

This research study was conducted in New Orleans by Veeragabu and co-investigators with stylists whose primary clientele is African American women. The research study was conducted by administering a pre-intervention survey, an educational intervention, then a post-intervention survey. After showing various examples of CCCA (ranging from mild to moderate) and having the stylist watch a two-minute educational video, they reported higher rates of understanding about when to refer to a physician. This was a marked change in what their pre-intervention responses reflected and what they would do before this information. The pre-intervention survey reported much higher rates of suggesting new hairstyles, new products, or continuing the same routine. Thus, this educational experience was highly effective at empowering the hair stylists with the education to make the most appropriate recommendations to their clients.

The diagnosis of scarring hair loss is time sensitive as the earlier it is caught, therapies can be implemented to help reduce future hair loss. Because of this, it is important that we train people who deal with hair for a living to be aware of potential warning signs of hair loss that indicate a need for a dermatology evaluation. This study provided a framework which could potentially be used as a model that would help identify hair pathologies earlier, which could contribute to more optimal outcomes.

It is really encouraging that in just two minutes, being showed some examples of scarring alopecia, and being taught about next steps, that most hairstylists recognized when to counsel a woman on when to seek further evaluation. Additionally, it is encouraging that 95.8% of the hairdressers reported that they were interested in learning more about various forms of scarring hair loss. Having hairstylists who want to be a part of helping detect diseases in their clients makes them wonderful screeners for alopecia. Because many people have long term relationships with their stylists, hairstylists are a wonderful group to bring up a potentially sensitive subject.

This model could be expanded outside of New Orleans to include a larger group of well-informed hairdressers. Additionally, because the interest in learning more was over 95%, more types of scarring alopecia could be added to the educational experience. This model is patient centric as promoting earlier detection provides optimal treatment options. Additionally, empowering hairdressers with medial information enables them to be critical screeners and an important part to their client's health.



**CICATRICAL ALOPECIA RESEARCH FOUNDATION (CARF)**

1586 Sumneytown Pike #1322 • Kulpville, PA 19443

267.613.9811 • [info@carfintl.org](mailto:info@carfintl.org) • [www.carfintl.org](http://www.carfintl.org)