

A Renaissance Hairstyle Resembling Frontal Fibrosing Alopecia

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In a recent study, Vanó-Galván and coworkers described the findings in 355 patients with frontal fibrosing alopecia (FFA) (1). It has a distinctive clinical presentation with slow regression of the frontal and temporal hairlines and contemporary loss of the eyebrows. It occurs mainly in post-menopausal women, but onset of the disease varies widely.

The origin and pathogenesis of FFA is unknown, hormonal factors have been suggested to be involved, and it has been linked to lichen planopilaris because of histopathological findings, but is now believed to be as a separate variety of the disease (1).

At the end of middle age and early renaissance, a hairstyle became fashionable among high-class ladies and of noble and royal descent. The women painfully plucked out their fronto-temporal hairs and eyebrows to create a high-browed hairless face that was regarded as beautiful (2).

Fig. 1 shows an example of the peculiar hairstyle. Additional portraits showing the hair fashion which prevailed for more than a century are plenty, e.g. Rogier van der Weyden's portrait of a lady c. 1450-60 (National Gallery, London) (2), Battista Sforza c. 1465 by Piero della Francesca (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), Simonetta Vespucci c. 1500 by Piero di Cosimo (Musée Conde, Chantilly), and a young woman painted in 1465 by Antonio del Pollaiuolo (Gemaldegalerie Berlin) (3).

The origin of the fashion is obscure. It could be speculated that some high-class lady, a princess or a queen had attracted FFA, so in order to please their idol ladies began to shave and pluck out their hair and eyebrows (2).

As a parallel to this suggestion, Queen Elisabeth I's curly hair prompted ladies at the court to dye the hair (2). As seen from her many portraits, she also favoured the high-browed renaissance fashion.

Traction alopecia does not affect hairs of the temporal region and eyebrows as is the case in FFA and the presented "Pisanello

hairstyle". Whether trichillomania has been involved in the origin of the fashion remains speculative.

References

1. Vanó-Galván S, Molina-Ruiz AM, Serrano-Falcón C, Arias-Santiago S, et al. Frontal fibrosing alopecia: A multicenter review of 355 patients. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 2014; 70: 670–678.
2. Bryer R. *The History of Hair. Fashion and Fantasy down the Ages.* London: Philip Wilson Publishers; 2000, p. 33.
3. Studenbrock C, Topper B. *Meisterwerke der europäischen Malerei.* Köln: Konemann Verlagsgesellschaft GmbH; 1999, pp 703, 707, 723.



Fig. 1. Young princess Ginevra d'Este (1419–1440) with frontal hair and eyebrows plucked out, a fashionable style of that period. She appears like a case of frontal fibrosing alopecia. Painting by Pisanello (Antonio Pisano) (1395–1455). Licensed under Public domain via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pisanello_016.jpg#mediaviewer/File:Pisanello_016.jpg.