



Lisa and Hooshang Akbari

## GETTING TO THE ROOTS: The Career of “Hair Doctor” Lisa Akbari

**L**LISA AKBARI SPEAKS QUIETLY AND DELIBERATELY AS SHE EXPLAINS THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF SERVICES AT THE WORLD TRICHOLOGY INSTITUTE, A CENTER FOR HAIR AND SCALP ANALYSIS AND TREATMENT. HER CAREFUL SPEECH IS BORNE OF HER UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRAUMA INFLECTED ON WOMEN SUFFERING FROM HAIR LOSS. WORLD TRICHOLOGY INSTITUTE IS A PLACE OF PEACE AND PRIVACY DESIGNED TO FACILITATE HEALING.

The warm brown tones, low lighting and soothing music inside the Institute are similar to that of a spa which is in contrast to the stark bright whites and lights of medical facilities where many women are referred to for problems like alopecia.

“When you have skin or scalp problems, you need to relax in order to heal,” Akbari says.

When Akbari, a licensed Memphis City Schools-educated cosmetologist and aesthetician for more than 30 years, became a Cosmetologist through the Memphis City Schools’ Cosmetology program, she hadn’t dreamed of this center or a career as a Trichologist. Akbari says she was good at cuts and styles when she completed her education, but, when it came down to the more serious problems her clients faced, she was left feeling helpless and limited by her training as a cosmetologist.

“I felt it wasn’t adequate,” she says. “There was a wealth of knowledge, but it did not address the needs of the scalp.”

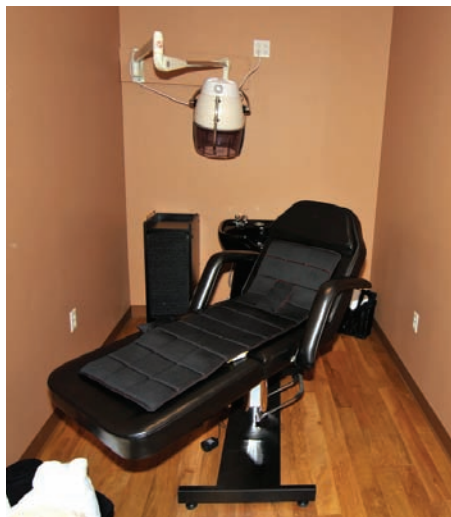
### FILLING THE VOID

Disappointed that she could not solve certain hair and scalp ailments, Akbari began to research the field of trichology, a move she credits to “divine order.”

“As I prayed for answers, the Lord sent me that way,” she explains.

She had already decided to delve further into the field of trichology by the time she met her husband, Hooshang Akbari who despite his background in economics, developed an interest in trichology as well. Together, the couple started a family and a business as directors and lead trichologists of Hair Nutrition and Research in Memphis.

The couple has twin daughters, one just finishing law school and the other finishing



her Master of Business Administration before entering medical school. Akbari says if pressed to write a book about how they have juggled building a multi-faceted business and raising two over-achieving children, she’d have to decline.

“I can’t write the book on that – it’s by God’s grace,” she says.

Akbari released her first line of products for African-American women in 1987 and since then has written three books on hair care, the first of which was self-published.

“I believe there is an epidemic of scalp and hair issues among African-American women,”

she says.

And, although her focus is on African-American women, Akbari treats men, women and children of all races suffering from problems bigger than the wrong hair style.

The goal is to empower and educate people about what’s really going on with their hair and scalp so that they know they do have options.

“They don’t know where it comes from,” she says. “They think they’re sick or it’s their diet or stress, and it’s none of those things.”

### THE ROOT OF HAIR PROBLEMS

The couple expanded from a salon to a clinic in 2003, but prior to that, they were primarily seen as a hair salon. But, Akbari insists that their services go deeper than styling.

“This is a facility that focuses on hair loss stabilization and treatment,” she says.

World Trichology Institute opened last year and includes a retain area for Akbari’s product line and hair accessories, separate areas for analysis and treatment, and an upbeat salon area. Client’s privacy is important to Akbari, so analysis and treatment are conducted in individual exam rooms. The facility also includes a media area for panel discussions, printing, training videos and pod casts for the Web.

New products are tested in another area of the facility although current items in Akbari’s product line are produced off-site. The last area





is for custom made wigs including a computer interface that shows what a client will look like in certain styles.

**EXPANDING HER EDUCATION**

Akbari is not just committed to clients, but also to other cosmetologists. She advocates a continuing education component to cosmetology in the state of Tennessee and does her part to teach cosmetologists more than just styling.

“They go so far and stop, and the rest is covered by the health field,” she says. “Cosmetologists weren’t empowered and are being blamed for everything.”

She is currently working with Southwest Tennessee Community College to create

trichology courses for the cosmetology students. There are classes onsite now and online courses in the works. Cosmetologists can register on her website to find what classes are currently being offered.

“We work with continuing education to train stylists on how to style with care and also on how to enter the trichology field,” she says.

Utilizing any medium she can, Akbari is working on the consumer and professional fronts in order to educate and empower people about their problems and in turn, their solutions. Ultimately, Akbari’s goal is to change the cosmetology field so that stylists are more empowered and more educated and therefore, better able to help their customers. **G**

