

# Surgeon of the Month

## Antonio Ruston, MD

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**Antonio Ruston, MD**  
Sao Paulo, Brazil

Antonio Ruston was born in São Paulo, Brazil, and is the older of two sons. He was raised and completed high school in the countryside of São Paulo State. He went on to attend medical school at São Paulo State University in Botucatu city.

As is true with many doctors, Tony's desire to practice medicine came from the motivation to help people, in particular children. Early on he realized that he had an affinity and natural skills for surgery, although he had no idea which surgical specialty he would choose until the

last year of medical school, when a friend asked him to help assist him in a breast reconstruction surgery. The surgery took about seven hours and he says that he did not sense the passing of time as he was so involved in the process. From that day, he knew he would become a plastic surgeon.

After he completed his medical degree, Tony moved to São Paulo for his residency (two years of general surgery and three years of plastic surgery at Oswaldo Cruz hospital). Like many doctors beginning a career, he spent almost all of his "free" time working as an ER physician trying to survive financially in a big city, and did so for five or six years after his residency until his practice developed. During this period, Tony also had other experiences in emergency medicine such as working on the main highway in Brazil as an "asphalt angel" rescuing car accident victims, working with NGOs (non-governmental organizations), and traveling to countries such as India, Nicaragua, and countries in Africa, which had suffered natural catastrophes or civil wars, to help people.

During his last year of residency in plastic surgery, Tony began to notice a minor balding in himself. This bothered him as he was still quite young. He then decided to visit "the best hair transplant surgeon" who had been recommended to him by some doctors he knew, and underwent his first surgery. The result was far less pleasing than what he expected and made him think, "If this is the best hair transplant surgeon, could this be the best possible result?"

In his last year of plastic surgery residency, Tony decided to more deeply explore the subject and started performing his first hair transplant cases. He started with small sessions and encountered many obstacles and difficult situations typical of beginners.

After completing his plastic surgery residency in 1995, Tony set out to learn how to perform this surgery, to see the best HT centers in the world, and to discover what this field that so fascinated him was all about. He spent 3 months traveling to many countries visiting clinics, among them that of Dr. Pierre Bedard in Montreal, who was the first to tell him about a new society called the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery.

Tony became a member of the ISHRS and since 1999 he has been attending all of the international meetings and many of the live workshops around the world as a participant and speaker. He always takes the opportunity to visit colleagues such as Drs. David Perez-Mesa, Matt Leavitt, Ken Washenik, Ed Suddleson, Ron Shapiro, Walter Unger, and Bill Rassman (whom he considers to be one of the most inventive in our field). He wishes to express his gratitude to those as well as others for their wonderful hospitality. He says that he always learns something new, such as a new instrument or a new idea, that has added value to his current practice.

Tony's clinic is in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, and he also has an office in Rio de Janeiro where he goes on Saturdays. He performs just one hair transplant per day, and he stays the whole time during the procedure, which takes about six hours. They are always megasessions with an average of 2,200–2,500 grafts (sometimes reaching 3,000).

Tony's surgical team is composed of another plastic surgeon, Dr. Tulio di Piero (who has become his right hand over the past 5 years), and 6 surgical assistants. He uses only microscopic follicular unit transplantation and, like all perfectionists, his true desire is to offer increasingly more natural results that cannot be detected by anyone under any circumstances. He has been working for nearly 4 years with the concept of ultra-fine single hairs to create a natural transition and a feathery aspect normally found in natural hairlines.

Tony ardently fights the stigma that this surgery bears and says that as long as bad professionals and obsolete techniques are still to be found in this field, the stigma will remain, because it only takes one bad result to discourage hundreds of potential patients.

Regarding his own hair, Tony says that he is satisfied with two corrections that he had done, one with his own team, and another with his friend, Ron Shapiro, but he still wishes to apply the ultra-fine technique to refine and perfect the appearance of his own frontal hairline.

Tony is single and says that he has never found himself at the right moment to build a family, in part due to lack of time, but says that this is one of his new personal goals. Tony has always done (and continues to do) philanthropic work, performing free surgeries when possible, and related activities.

Some of Tony's many hobbies are traveling, discovering new cultures and languages, and diving. However, his greatest passion without a doubt, besides surgery, is singing and producing his own shows. He has done this since his youth, going from playing guitar and singing in bars during his college years to the present, where every year he does one big show in São Paulo, each with a different theme (movie sound tracks, pop rock, and of course, Elvis). He says that it is his way of blowing off steam and of giving him life force. He says that music is the soul's happiness, improves the state of one's spirit, and facilitates personal relationships. Perhaps this is why in the ISHRS he has made so many and such good friends in what he considers to be a big family with "relatives" all over the world. ♦