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Editor's Note: English translation below. Access [the original story here](#).

From Depression to Suicide Trump's Big Risk with the Medicine that Maintains His Mane

Finasteride, the drug that the president takes to preserve his hair, has irreversible adverse effects. Additionally, some claim it has caused several young people around the world to commit suicide

By Guillermo García Ballezá, Barcelona

Donald Trump's hair is nearly as famous as the wall he wants to build along the Mexican border. The locks of the 45th president of the United States have not gone unnoticed by anyone, and have been the object of merciless ridicule and criticism. As well as envy.

The bizarre blonde helmet worn by the tycoon has long been an unexplained mystery. Until recently. His dermatologist, Dr. Harold Bornstein, revealed in February that Trump takes finasteride to prevent hair loss and boost hair growth. The drug is used widely among men who fear losing their hair due to androgenetic alopecia, aka a natural tendency to baldness.

What is finasteride?

Finasteride is a chemical compound that inhibits the conversion of testosterone to DHT, a testosterone derivative that serves for the development of sexual organs during adolescence, among other things. This compound was first used for medical purposes to treat enlarged prostate. However, in the mid-1990s, some studies in the United States showed that the drug could be effective in treating androgenetic alopecia. Since then, its use has grown exponentially, treating baldness in doses of 1 mg. In some cases, however, it is given in doses of 5 mg daily, the same dose used for the treatment enlarged prostate.

Subsequent studies have confirmed what the first investigations revealed: finasteride, which should be taken for life, is very effective against hair loss. For example, a study published in 1998 in the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology showed that only 1% of a sample of more than 500 men given Finasteride in doses of 1mg daily experienced hair loss over a period of two years. In addition, nearly two-thirds had significantly increased their hair density. And this is just one of many studies published in medical journals, mostly American. In conclusion, finasteride works. So it's no wonder Donald Trump uses it.

What patients don't know

But it's not all a bed of roses for patients taking this medication. On May 24, the UK Health Ministry warned of an unusual number of cases of depression among patients who consumed finasteride in doses of 1mg. The agency also said that, in some cases,

the drug leads to suicide. For this reason, it has advised doctors to pay special attention when prescribing the drug.

For Dr. John Santmann, a physician based in the state of New Jersey, these side effects are nothing new. He claims that his 22-year-old son committed suicide following depression caused by Propecia, a drug containing 1mg of finasteride. He believes that his son had post-finasteride syndrome, whose symptoms range from impotence to severe depression with a suicidal tendency. That's why he created the Post-Finasteride Syndrome Foundation (PFS Foundation), which raises funding for research on the subject, raises awareness among the medical community, and helps support PFS patients around the world.

[PHOTO CAPTION: Randy Santmann committed suicide at age 22. His father claims that Propecia was the trigger for the depression that led him to take his own life.]

The PFS Foundation estimates that there are 300,000 cases of people suffering from post-finasteride syndrome in the world. However, "many do not know because their side effects thus far are not overwhelming." Since Donald Trump's rise to power, the drug has caught the attention of many, particularly its adverse effects.

Dr. Santmann's son is not the only suicide case whose relatives claim was due to finasteride. Eric Rodriguez, a 33-year-old American who used Propecia to treat his incipient baldness, shot himself with a 9mm Glock at his parents' pier on January 19, 2016. Shortly before, he told his family he felt "like a 99-year-old man in the body a 33-year-old."

According to the Uppsala Monitoring Center, an organization that seeks to promote responsible drug use and collaborates with the World Health Organization, more than 8,000 cases of post-finasteride syndrome have been reported in the Americas. But for Dr. Santmann, this does not reflect reality. He says that many of those who suffer from the syndrome are unaware that the pill can produce these effects. No one has told them.

Some studies support his claim. This year, a study conducted at Northwestern University showed that around 1.5% of finasteride patients, who had no prior history of the condition, experienced erectile dysfunction. The risk of impotence increased among those under 42 years of age.

Other studies, like the one published in 2008 by doctors Nicole Rogers and Mark Avramen in the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology, indicate that finasteride can cause mental side effects. Therefore, in the absence of further studies, they recommend that special precautions should be taken.

In Spain there have also been cases of patients suffering from this syndrome. Victoriano is a 33-year-old male who took finasteride in a dose of 1mg from the age of 22 to 30. He says he quit the medication after feeling the first symptoms. In his case, he had no more sexual problems than a slight decrease in libido. What really led him to stop taking finasteride was the progressive inability to focus on one thing. To the point of losing consciousness of what he was doing—so-called brain fog. He explains that one day he wound up playing the piano in a restaurant where he was dining, without knowing how he ended up there. Even after quitting the medication, his symptoms persisted for years, and even today there are relapses.

In fact, it's the permanence of the condition that has led Dr. Santmann to state that using finasteride to treat alopecia is absurd. All drugs can have adverse side effects proportionate to those of finasteride. But in most cases, they go away once the medication is stopped. "Not only is this not the case with finasteride," he says, "but PFS has no cure."

However, Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD), which produces and distributes Propecia in Spain, claims that the drug is safe because "it is a product that has performed well in clinical trials, and been approved by health authorities." As for those who prescribe the drug, according to sources consulted by this newspaper, some doctors counsel patients to weigh the risks of taking finasteride against the promise of keep their hair. Buy they say that patients don't have to worry much, since only around 1.5% of men are adversely impacted.

Dr. Santmann concludes that all this too is absurd.

"Imagine being assured that you can get back the hair you lost and keep it forever. But you're also told that you have to pick one of a hundred weapons on a table—only one of which is loaded—hold it to your head and pull the trigger," he says. "

If you do and you survive, you will have hair for a lifetime. Most of us wouldn't think twice about leaving the room unceremoniously."