

MOHS MICROGRAPHIC SURGERY

Dr Kevin McKerrow, MBChB, FRACP, FACMS
SKIN SPECIALIST CENTRE, AUCKLAND

Mohs micrographic surgery, developed by Dr Federick Mohs, is the most precise method of treating certain types of non-melanoma skin cancer.

The dermatologist removes the tumour and immediately examines sections of the tissue under the microscope to ensure no cancerous cells remain.

Removal of further tissue may be required until the area is tumour-free.

Mohs surgery provides the highest cure rate for both untreated and recurrent non-melanoma skin cancers, as well as minimising the removal of normal tissue. As a consequence, the smallest defect is produced, allowing for an optimal cosmetic result. No surgeon or technique, however, can guarantee a 100 percent chance of cure.

Which Patients are Suitable Candidates for Mohs Surgery?

Patients with Basal cell carcinoma, Squamous cell carcinoma and certain rare neoplasms should be considered for Mohs surgery if they fall within one of the following criteria:

- Recurrent skin cancer
- Incomplete removal of tumour
- Large tumours (greater than 2cm in diameter)
- Skin cancers occurring in sites where recurrence rates with traditional approaches are high. Such areas include tumours around the eye, nose and lips.

Advantages of Mohs Surgery?

1. The highest cure rate (99 percent)
2. Minimises the potential for scarring or disfigurement.
3. It is the most exact, precise means of removal.
4. Routinely performed under local anaesthesia as an out-patient, but the service is provided for general anaesthesia on site if required.
5. Reconstructive surgery takes place under optimum conditions (tumour-free).
6. Procedure is usually completed within half a day.
7. Because Mohs surgeons are also dermatologists and have extensive training in reconstructive surgery, they have extensive knowledge of the skin and its healing properties, which helps produce the best cosmetic result.

Training for Mohs Surgery

Training for Fellowships for Mohs surgery takes one to two years at an approved centre in the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Such training programmes incorporate intensive training in skin surgery, including plastic, oculo-plastic and head and neck surgery, and extensive training in dermatopathology and histopathologic techniques.

Dr Kevin McKerrow is one of two New Zealand dermatologists who is a Fellow of the American College of Mohs Micrographic Surgery and Cutaneous Oncology.

The Skin Specialist Centre is unique in providing an on-site laboratory for Mohs surgery and full surgical anaesthesia services, if required.