

Study of Efficacy and Safety of Platelet Rich Plasma Therapy Combined With microneedling on Acne Scars

Harmeet Kaur¹, Sachin Agarwal², Amarjeet Singh³, Akhil Kumar Singh⁴, Sagar⁵, Parth⁶

¹Post graduate, ²Professor, ³Assistant Professor, Department of Dermatology, ⁴Associate Professor, Department of Dermatology, Sarawathi institute of Medical Sciences Hapur(U.P)

Abstract

Background: - Acne Vulgaris is an extremely common disorder. More than ninety percent of the patients with acne vulgaris suffer scarring leading to psychological impact and cosmetic disfigurement after healing of their acne lesions. Atrophic acne scars are more common and difficult to treat. These can be sub-classified into icepick, rolling and box car depending on their width, depth and shape. Microneedling device performs acne scar remodelling via collagen induction therapy. Autologous platelet-rich plasma therapy combined with microneedling is a new adjuvant treatment modality of the wound healing cascade based on the body's self-healing mechanisms.

Objective:- Assessment of safety and efficacy of autologous platelet rich plasma therapy combined with microneedling on atrophic acne scars.

Methods: 46 patients with acne scars of 18-25 years age group underwent three consecutive sittings of microneedling combined with PRP procedure, conducted at an interval of 4 weeks followed by a last assessment done after 3 months of final sitting.

The lesions were classified on Goodman's qualitative scale and serial photography.

Results: Two independent dermatologists performed evaluation and follow up at subsequent visits. Majority (34) patients with good response (improvement by Grade 1) constituting to (73.91%) in total. There was an overall improvement in 86.9% of cases without any serious complications.

Conclusion: - Autologous PRP combined with Microneedling is an effective modality in enhancing clinical outcomes and overall cosmetic appearance of acne scars.

Keywords: acne, comedones, dermabrasion, microneedling.

Introduction

As per global burden of skin disease study data, Acne comprises one of the three most common skin diseases. Acne is an inflammatory chronically persisting disease of the pilosebaceous units. It has wide spectrum

of presentation from open and closed comedones, erythematous papules and pustules, nodules, pseudocysts and deep pustules. It usually starts in adolescence and by the mid-twenties undergoes resolution¹. Its peak distribution seen in prevalence and severity between 14- 17 years aged females, when 40% are affected, and between 16 and 19 years in males, when 35% are affected².

Resolution seems to occur in two ways, either as resolution of individual lesions or resolution of the disease as a whole. Post inflammatory skin pigmentation

Corresponding Author:

Dr Sachin Agarwal

Professor, Department of Dermatology
Saraswathi Institute of Medical Sciences, Hapur (U.P)
Harypol278@gmail.com

and scarring are common residuals. It has been observed in a clinical trial that some degree of scarring is observed in as many as ninety five percent of acne patients. It has been shown that individual sebaceous glands function at different rates in all Acne patients³. Resolution may be achieved with specific changes in these Acne-prone hypersecretory glands related to cytokine activity in glands⁴.

The Acne scars are classified broadly as macular, atrophic, hypertrophic or keloidal scars. Further atrophic Acne scar divided into; Ice pick, Rolling and box scars⁸. Atrophic Acne scars seem to occur more commonly in population than keloidal and hypertrophic scars with a ratio 3:1. The ice pick type constituted (60%–70%) of total scars, the box scar (20%–30%), and rolling scars (15%–25%) as seen in one clinical trial². Injury due to the skin inflammation initiates a cascade of wound healing events⁹.

The importance of reducing the duration and intensity of the inflammation lies in stressing on the importance of the Acne treatment. A number of treatments modalities are available to reduce the overall visibility/appearance of scars.

Micro needling represents as one of the important existing treatment modalities for Acne scars, stretch marks, wrinkles, and facial rejuvenation. It is a rolling device which is embedded with multiple small needles which is used in procedure. The device is rolled multiple times on desired site; for required depth causing micro injury to dermis¹⁰.

The phase one inflammation starts immediately after the procedure followed by fibroblasts invasion. The wound closure function of fibroblasts is performed by migration to the point of invasion for wound healing. It also leads to stimulation of endothelial cells which causes neo- angiogenesis. The natural tissue remodeling further continues for 8 weeks to 1 year^{11,12}. Atrophic acne scars^{13,14,15} can be effectively managed by Micro needling. The technique of Micro needling is easy, cost effective, and associated with fewer side effects and short downtime period.

Autologous platelet-rich plasma (PRP) therapy is one of the latest upcoming techniques in the field of dermatology. It was originally started and used as

an autologous transfusion component after an open-heart operation to avoid homologous blood product transfusion¹⁶.

The optimal PRP platelet concentration after having 300-700%¹⁷ enrichment should be more than 10 lakhs platelets/ μ l. It contains high concentrations of platelet derived growth factors.

Higher amounts of platelet derived growth factors present in concentrate can make it suitable to use in several other therapeutic indications such as treatment of androgenic alopecia, Acne scars, hair transplantation graft survival, skin rejuvenation, better wound healing, face lifting and several other cosmetic procedures¹⁸⁻²¹.

Platelets on activation can release several growth factors and cytokines like platelet-derived growth factors (PDGF), transforming growth factors (TGF), vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), Insulin-like growth factor (IGF), epidermal growth factor (EGF), and interleukin (IL)-1. Fibroblasts are the cells that are activated by TGF-beta²².

Materials and Method

The present study was carried out in the Department of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprosy, Saraswathi Institute of Medical Sciences, Hapur. In this prospective, time-bound study, 50 patients diagnosed with atrophic acne scars were included from October 2017 to February 2019. Prior approval was taken from medical ethical and scientific committee of the hospital. Out of fifty patients four patients left treatment in between and did not appear for follow up, so study was completed on 46 patients in given time frame.

Selection of Patients

• Inclusion criteria

Ø Patients with grade 2 to 4 Atrophic acne scars, classified on the basis of Goodman's qualitative classification.

Ø No active acne lesions.

• Exclusion criteria

Ø Positive history of keloidal tendency.

Ø Patients having history of bleeding diathesis or

platelets related disorders or any anticoagulant therapy..

Ø History of major surgery in past six months.

Ø Presence or history of any acute infection on face like herpes, folliculitis etc.

Ø Patients of HIV, HBsAG, or any other chronic illness.

Ø Pregnant females.

Final results for clinical improvement were made using following parameter:

Mean scores of Pre and Post treatment Goodman's qualitative scores were calculated for right and left halves and percentage of improvement was calculated for both the halves combinedly. Paired t test was applied among pre and post treatment scores of right and left halves.

Procedure-

Preparation of Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP)

3ml of anticoagulant (ACD) was taken in 20 ml syringe from anticoagulant bag. Patients were kept supine in stable position, and 17 ml of venous blood was withdrawn in above syringe. Gentle shaking of the Syringe was done for 5 times for proper mixing of anticoagulant with blood.

- Initially, two sterile 10 ml tubes were taken and blood was transferred to each tube.

- All blood samples were processed at blood bank for preparation of platelet rich plasma. Standard REMI centrifugation machine was used for centrifugation process.

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- First centrifugation was done after 30 min from blood sampling at 1500 Revolutions per minute (rpm) for 5 min.

- Three layers were formed in each tube; i.e. plasma, buffy coat and red cell sediments.

- Plasma and part of buffy coat was separated in separate sterile tube, and red cell sediments were discarded.

- The resultant solution was further centrifuged at 2300 rpm for 15 min.

- Two layers of plasma were formed; dense layer of platelets at the bottom and clear fluid layer on the top. Most of the clear fluid (platelet poor plasma) was removed, leaving behind small solution which is then gently wobbled to form platelet rich plasma.

- Platelet count assessment was performed in automated platelet counter machine in pathology department before each session for desired platelet number achievement.

The Instrument

- The dermaroller used for microneedling procedure in the present study had 1.5 mm long needles similar to the other studies conducted in India.

- After application of topical anaesthesia, PRP was injected intradermally into acne scars using insulin syringe followed by microneedling performed 6-8 times in each direction in four quadrants.

Follow-up

Patients were observed for follow up on 2nd and 30th day post procedure. On 30th day the procedure was repeated as per above guidelines.

Results

- Total 3 sessions of microneedling were performed at monthly interval. Final assessment of improvement was done for three months at monthly intervals after completion of treatment for each patient

Statistical Analysis

The data was coded and entered into Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Analysis was done using SPSS version 20 (IBM SPSS Statistics Inc., Chicago, Illinois, USA) Windows software program. Descriptive statistics included computation of percentages, means and standard deviations. Chi-square test used for qualitative data whenever two or more than two groups were used to compare. Level of significance was set at $P \leq 0.05$.

DISTRIBUTION OF CASES ACCORDING TO GRADES BEFORE TREATMENT

Grade	Frequency	Percent
Grade 4	18	39.1%
Grade 3	23	50.0%
Grade 2	5	10.86%
Grade 1	0	0%
Total	46	100.0

Comparison Of Proportions According To Grades Before The Treatment And After Third Sitting

			Score				Total
			Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	
Time interval	Before treatment	N	0	5	23	18	46
		%	0.0%	10.9%	50.0%	39.1%	100.0%
	After 3 sitting	N	1	17	21	7	46
		%	2.2%	37.0%	45.7%	15.2%	100.0%
Total		N	1	22	44	25	92
		%	1.1%	23.9%	47.8%	27.2%	100.0%

Distribution of cases according to the grading before the treatment, after 3 sittings and after 3 months of final sitting

			Score				Total
			Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	
Time interval	Before treatment	N	0	5	23	18	46
		%	0.0%	10.9%	50.0%	39.1%	100.0%
	After 3 sitting	N	1	17	21	7	46
		%	2.2%	37.0%	45.7%	15.2%	100.0%
	After 3 month	N	5	25	14	2	46
		%	10.9%	54.3%	30.4%	4.3%	100.0%

Overall out of 46 cases, There were 6 cases (13.04%) 4 cases of Grade 4 improved to Grade 2 and 2 cases of Grade 3 improved to Grade 1 with an excellent response. There were majority (34) patients with good response (improvement by Grade 1) constituting to (73.91%) in total that comprises of 12 cases with Grade 4 improved to Grade 3, 19 cases with Grade 3 improved to Grade 2 and 3 cases with Grade 2 improved to Grade 1. Hence, there was an overall improvement in 86.9% of cases without any serious complications like milia formation or post inflammatory hyperpigmentation. There were 6 cases (13%) that is 2 cases each of Grade 4, 3 and 2 in which there was no improvement.

Discussion

Acne scar management has been a challenging task and focus of interest of Dermatologists for several decades. Because of the work of various investigators, remarkable advances have been made to revise atrophic acne scars namely ice pick, rolling or superficial, and boxcar or depressed fibrotic scars. In present study an attempt has been made to prove the efficacy of micro needling combined with autologous platelet rich plasma therapy for atrophic acne scars which is a cheap and an effective modality to treat atrophic scars.

Out of the total 50 cases recruited, 46 cases completed the study with 3 sittings at an interval for 4 weeks and followed up for 3 months after the final sitting.

Grading System

In the present study measurement of efficacy of acne scars improvement and their grading was done by Goodman and Baron Grading system. This grading scale was also used in most of the other studies conducted in India and other parts of the World (Srivastava R et al 2016, Pandey A et al 2015, Dogra S et al 2014, Alam M et al 2014, Asif et al while only Fabbrocini et al in 2014 used the Global Aesthetic improvement scale.

Conclusion

Microneedling combined with Autologous Platelet Rich Plasma therapy is an excellent option for the treatment of atrophic acne scars with good clinical outcomes, though recently ablative and non-ablative lasers have been introduced but they have their own

limitations. The down time (erythema) may be present for months together with ablative lasers. Hence, it is a low cost, well tolerable and a very simplified day care procedure with minimal side effects and complications.

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Conflict of Interest – Nil

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