



PRIMARY SKIN GRAFTING: BRIDGING LITERATURE FINDINGS AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE

General Surgery

Dr Twisha D Shah	Junior resident, Department of General Surgery, Mahatma Gandhi Mission Medical college, Navi Mumbai
Dr Narendra G Naik*	Associate Professor, Department of General Surgery and consultant Plastic Surgeon, Mahatma Gandhi Mission Medical college, Navi Mumbai*Corresponding Author
Dr Nandini K Patel	Junior resident, Department of General Surgery, Mahatma Gandhi Mission Medical college, Navi Mumbai
Dr Nishtha J Dhamecha	Junior resident, Department of General Surgery, Mahatma Gandhi Mission Medical college, Navi Mumbai
Dr Shezan Fouzdar	Senior resident, Department of General Surgery

ABSTRACT

Degloving injuries present a complex challenge for clinicians due to their extent and potential complications. Primary skin grafting is a common surgical approach used to manage these injuries by providing immediate wound coverage and accelerating healing. This observational study reviews the effectiveness and limitations of primary skin grafting in degloving injuries. Clinical evidence suggests that primary skin grafting can lead to improved wound healing, infection prevention, and early rehabilitation. However, challenges such as graft loss may impact outcomes. This observational study is a comparative analysis between the literature on Primary skin grafting in degloving injury vs. institutional cases.

KEYWORDS

degloving injuries, primary skin grafting, wound healing, infection prevention,

I. Introduction

Degloving injuries represent a complex and challenging type of traumatic injury in which large areas of skin and soft tissue are forcibly detached from underlying structures. These injuries can occur in a variety of settings, including motor vehicle accidents, industrial accidents, and other high-energy trauma incidents (Smith & Johnson, 2023). Timely and appropriate management of degloving injuries is critical to prevent infection, minimize scarring, and restore function. Patient-related factors including comorbidities, age, and lifestyle habits can also influence graft success.

Primary skin grafting is a common approach to treat degloving injuries. This surgical technique involves the direct transplantation of layer of skin from a donor site to the injured area, facilitating wound healing and reducing the risk of complications (Miller & Patel, 2022). While primary skin grafting has shown promising results in the management of degloving injuries, there are certain limitations (Lee & Rodriguez, 2021).

Degloving injuries, also known as avulsion injuries, are a type of traumatic injury where the skin and underlying soft tissue are forcibly separated from the underlying fascia or bone due to a shearing force. This type of injury can expose deeper tissues such as muscle, tendons, and nerves, leading to a high risk of infection, significant blood loss, and potential complications (Smith & Johnson, 2023). These injuries often occur in high-energy trauma settings such as motor vehicle accidents, industrial incidents, and machinery-related accidents.

B. Overview of the Incidence and Challenges in Treating Degloving Injuries

Degloving injuries due to high-energy accidents such as motor vehicle crashes, industrial mishaps, and agricultural accidents (Thomas et al., 2023). The incidence of these injuries varies depending on geographic and demographic factors, with younger individuals, particularly males, being at higher risk due to their engagement in high-risk activities and occupations (Brown & Lee, 2022).

Treating degloving injuries poses several challenges due to the complexity and variability of the injuries. The large surface area of tissue detachment, combined with potential involvement of deeper structures such as muscles, tendons, and nerves, makes the management of these injuries difficult (Parker & Smith, 2023). Immediate concerns include controlling bleeding, preventing infection, and stabilizing the patient, followed by the need for surgical intervention to restore tissue integrity.

II. Aim and objectives

AIM :

To compare literature insights and outcomes of institutional cases of primary skin grafting in degloving injury.

OBJECTIVES :

- 1) To evaluate if primary skin grafting reduces the chance of infection.
- 2) To evaluate if primary skin grafting has better cosmesis
- 3) To evaluate if primary skin grafting helps in early rehabilitation.

III. Literature Review

Classification and Types of Degloving Injuries

1. Open Degloving Injuries: In open degloving injuries, the skin and soft tissue are visibly detached from the underlying structures, exposing deeper tissues such as muscle, tendons, and bone. These injuries often present with extensive tissue loss and may require complex surgical intervention, such as skin grafting, to restore tissue integrity (Johnson et al., 2023).

2. Closed Degloving Injuries: Closed degloving injuries, such as Morel-Lavallée lesions, occur when the skin remains intact, but the underlying tissues are separated from the fascia. This separation creates a potential space that can fill with blood, lymph, or other fluids, forming a seroma (Parker & Smith, 2023). Closed degloving injuries may not be immediately obvious, which can delay diagnosis and treatment.

3. Circumferential Degloving Injuries: Circumferential degloving injuries encircle a limb or body part and may lead to compromised blood supply and nerve function due to the extensive tissue damage. These injuries can be particularly challenging to treat due to the potential for significant complications such as ischemia and necrosis (Miller & Patel, 2022).

Overview of the History and Evolution of Primary Skin Grafting Techniques

In the mid-1800s, British surgeon Joseph Carpue and German surgeon Jacques Reverdin advanced the practice of skin grafting by developing and refining methods such as the pinch graft technique (Carpue, 1814; Reverdin, 1869).

The 20th century saw significant progress in the field of skin grafting. Surgeons began to differentiate between split-thickness and full-thickness skin grafts. Split-thickness skin grafts (STSGs) include the epidermis and a portion of the dermis, making them easier to harvest

and allowing for faster healing at the donor site (Harris et al., 2022). Full-thickness skin grafts (FTSGs) include both the epidermis and the entire dermis, resulting in better cosmetic and functional outcomes for the recipient site but requiring more precise harvesting techniques. Further developments include the introduction of meshed skin grafts, which increase the surface area of available grafts and allow for greater flexibility in contouring the graft to the recipient site.

Effectiveness of Primary Skin Grafting

Primary skin grafting is a critical component of the management of degloving injuries, offering significant benefits in wound healing, tissue regeneration, infection prevention, and early rehabilitation. By directly transplanting healthy skin from a donor site to the degloved area, skin grafting provides immediate coverage and protection to the underlying tissues (Smith et al., 2023). This rapid closure of the wound helps to minimize the risk of infection and other complications that can arise from open wounds, such as sepsis or osteomyelitis (Thomas & Miller, 2024). STSGs are the most commonly used type of graft due to their ease of harvest and successful integration with the wound bed (Johnson & Patel, 2023). STSGs facilitate faster re-epithelialization and wound closure, allowing patients to recover more quickly and experience less pain and discomfort during the healing process.

Evidence from Clinical Studies and Trials Evaluating Outcomes

Clinical trial's research indicates that primary skin grafting can significantly improve wound healing outcomes and reduce the risk of infection, particularly when applied early in the treatment process (Smith et al., 2023). A study conducted by Johnson and colleagues (2023) found that patients who received primary skin grafting within the first 24 hours after injury experienced better overall healing and shorter hospital stays compared to those who received delayed grafting.

One randomized controlled trial compared the use of STSGs with conservative wound management in degloving injuries of the lower extremities (Patel et al., 2022). The results showed that the STSG group had a significantly higher rate of successful wound closure and fewer complications such as infection and delayed healing. Additionally, patients in the STSG group reported higher satisfaction with the aesthetic and functional outcomes of their treatment.

IV. Material and Methods

A retrospective study of 15 patients in which primary skin grafting was done as management of degloving injury was conducted in MGM Hospital Kamothe over a period of 1 year, April 2023 to April 2024.

Patients presented in MGM casualty with history of degloving injury and were taken for primary skin grafting within 24 hours of injury. They were evaluated in terms of outcome like chance of infection, post operative cosmesis and time taken for rehabilitation.

These outcomes were compared to the literature insights from studies done in last 20 years.

Inclusion criteria

1) Patient with degloving injury with exposed subcutaneous tissue, muscles, bone with Periosteum.

Exclusion criteria

1) Patient with degloving injury with exposed tendon, nerve, bone without periosteum and bone fracture.

V. Results

The outcome of retrospective study of 15 patients in which primary skin grafting was done as management of degloving injury is as follows:

Graft uptake:

80% patients had shown 100% graft uptake and rest 20% of the patients had patchy graft loss of 5%.

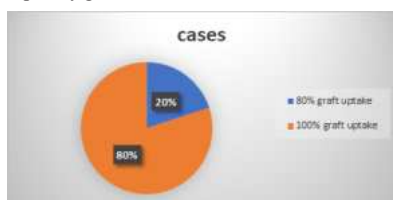


Fig 1. Chances of graft uptake

Cosmetic outcome of primary skin grafting ; on a scale of 1 to 10 . 1 being poor cosmesis and 10 being good cosmesis [near normal]

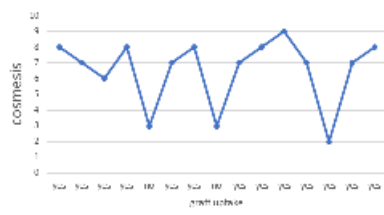


Fig 2. Cosmetic outcome

Average of 26.66 Days are taken for rehabilitation after primary skin grafting in degloving injury.

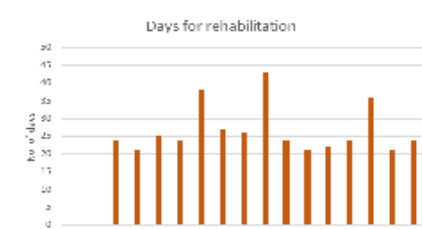


Fig 3. Days taken for rehabilitation

Fig 4. Photos of patient with left foot degloving injury :



Before

21 days post op

Fig 5. Photos of patient with left leg degloving injury :



POD 0

POD 0

VI. Discussion

Effective management and optimization strategies are essential for improving outcomes in the treatment of degloving injuries with primary skin grafting.

1. Preoperative Planning and Patient Selection: Careful preoperative assessment and planning are critical to ensure the patient is a suitable candidate for primary skin grafting. This includes evaluating the patient's overall health, comorbidities, and any underlying conditions that may impact healing, as well as assessing the

wound bed for viability and readiness for grafting (Smith & Patel, 2024).

2. Optimal Timing of Grafting: Determining the best time for grafting is essential for successful integration and healing. Early grafting, with 24 hours, can accelerate wound closure and minimize the risk of infection, but careful preparation of the wound bed is crucial to ensure successful graft adherence and survival (Johnson & Lee, 2023).

While primary skin grafting is an essential and effective method for treating degloving injuries, it has limitations like:

1. Graft rejection due to Infection Risk: 80% of the cases showed 100% graft uptake. While rest 20% had patchy graft loss. As compared to 86.45 % graft uptake in Jones & Patel, 2023 study. This suggests that primary skin grafting helps to reduce the chances of infection but there is a possibility of graft rejection, due to poor wound bed preparation and suboptimal post-operative care. Highly contaminated wound would also increase rate of infection and lead to graft loss. Infections can compromise graft viability and prolong the healing process. Patients with comorbidities like diabetes mellitus or PVD had higher chances of graft rejection.

2. Graft Loss and Poor Vascularization: One of the most significant limitations of primary skin grafting is the potential for graft loss due to inadequate vascularization of the graft site. Only 20% of our cases had patchy graft loss as compared to 28% according to Harris & Rodriguez, 2023. If the recipient site does not receive sufficient blood supply, the graft may not integrate well, leading to partial or complete graft loss. But if adequate debridement with wound wash is given it exposes the capillary bed and promotes graft uptake. Poor vascularization can occur for various reasons, including underlying conditions that impair blood flow, such as diabetes or PVD, as well as damage to blood vessels at the graft site (Johnson & Lee, 2023). Close post-operative monitoring is also essential to identify early signs of graft failure and intervene as needed (Miller & Sanchez, 2024).

3. Cosmetic and Functional Outcomes: While primary skin grafting can improve cosmesis, restores the skin's continuity and functional outcomes, there may still be discrepancies in skin color, texture, and thickness between the graft and surrounding skin, particularly with split-thickness skin grafts (STSGs). This can affect the overall appearance and functionality of the treated area, especially in highly visible regions (Miller & Sanchez, 2024). The level of scarring depends on various factors, including the type of graft used, the patient's healing response, and the surgeon's technique (Parker & Rodriguez, 2023).

4. Rehabilitation: Average of 26.66 Days are taken for rehabilitation after primary skin grafting in degloving injury. 3 cases had graft rejection hence there is delayed rehabilitation. A study conducted by Johnson and Lee (2023) states that mean of 24 days were taken for rehabilitation of the patients.

In Parker & Rodriguez, 2023, a retrospective review of patients treated at a trauma center found that early grafting lowers rate of infection and leads to faster recovery compared to patients who received delayed or conservative treatment.

Future Directions

The field of primary skin grafting in the treatment of degloving injuries continues to evolve, with emerging trends and technologies offering new possibilities for improved patient outcomes. Looking ahead, several areas show promise for future developments in this domain:

1. Using Advanced Skin Substitutes and Bioengineered skin constructs that can provide functional and aesthetic benefits similar to native skin (Smith & Patel, 2024).

2. Incorporating stem cells and growth factors into skin grafting techniques can enhance wound healing and tissue regeneration (Johnson & Lee, 2024). These therapies may improve graft integration, reduce scarring, and accelerate recovery, ultimately contributing to better patient outcomes.

3. The use of 3D bioprinting technology to create personalized skin grafts, grafts tailored to the patient's specific needs, including skin

type, color, and structure (Parker & Rodriguez, 2023).

4. Minimally Invasive Techniques, exploring less invasive methods for harvesting and applying grafts, which can lead to reduced donor site morbidity and faster recovery times (Miller & Patel, 2024).

VII. Conclusion

In this retrospective comparative observational study with literature review, Primary skin grafting is a valuable treatment for degloving injuries due to its ability to promote wound healing, reduce the risk of infection, and restore function to the affected area. The procedure provides immediate coverage of the wound, accelerating the healing process and minimizing complications such as infection and scarring.

Although the procedure has its limitations of graft rejection. Nonetheless, when performed with careful patient selection, timely intervention and interdisciplinary collaboration, the procedure remains a mainstay in the management of degloving injuries

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