Platelet-rich plasma in the management of chronic low back pain

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.22271/ortho.2019.v5.i4r.3179

Abstract

Background: Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) is an autologous blood concentrate that contains a natural concentration of autologous growth factors and cytokines and is currently widely used in the clinical setting for tissue regeneration and repair. PRP has great potential to stimulate cell proliferation and metabolic activity of IVD cells in vitro. Several animal studies have shown that the injection of PRP into degenerated IVDs is effective in restoring structural changes (IVD height) and improving the matrix integrity of degenerated IVDs as evaluated by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and histology. The results of this basic research have shown the great possibility that PRP has significant biological effects for tissue repair to counteract IVD degeneration. Clinical studies for evaluating the effects of the injection of PRP into degenerated IVDs for patients with discogenic LBP have been reviewed. Although there was only one double-blind randomized controlled trial, all the studies reported that PRP was safe and effective in reducing back pain.

Keywords: Platelet rich plasma, chronic low back pain, lumbar disc degeneration, effectiveness

Introduction

Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) is an autologous blood concentrate that contains a natural concentration of autologous growth factors and cytokines and is currently widely used in the clinical setting for tissue regeneration and repair. PRP has great potential to stimulate cell proliferation and metabolic activity of IVD cells in vitro. Several animal studies have shown that the injection of PRP into degenerated IVDs is effective in restoring structural changes (IVD height) and improving the matrix integrity of degenerated IVDs as evaluated by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and histology. The results of this basic research have shown the great possibility that PRP has significant biological effects for tissue repair to counteract IVD degeneration. Clinical studies for evaluating the effects of the injection of PRP into degenerated IVDs for patients with discogenic LBP have been reviewed. Although there was only one double-blind randomized controlled trial, all the studies reported that PRP was safe and effective in reducing back pain.

Lower back pain is one of the most common ailments in today’s world that will make them land in an Orthopaedics office. We do not have a definite statistics of these patients in our country but in USA according to a report it affected around twenty five lakh Americans and the total cost of the treatment was in access of one hundred crore dollars [1-4]. Another study reported the prevalence of lower back pain in a lifetime was around eighty four percent [5]. Against this a plethora of causes for lower back pain and this is one area which has always challenged the practising orthopaedic surgeons. So to pin point the diagnosis the doctors needs a battery of tests which results in the rise in the cost [2]. First the anatomical structures are checked for any deviations and majority of the times without any good facility for diagnosis, it leads to nonspecific diagnosis. Evidence suggests that MRI is associated with high false positivity rates due to normal aging asymptomatic subjects also [6-9]. Against this evidence also the practice of prescribing MRI diagnostic study and pain killer prescription still goes on [10-12]. Platelet-rich plasma therapy is a non-invasive, nonsurgical biologic intervention that has gained attention in the treatment of degenerative and musculoskeletal conditions [13, 14].
So this study puts in an effort to find the effectiveness of platelet-rich plasma in the management of chronic low back pain.

Aims and objectives
To study the effects of Platelet rich plasma in management of chronic low back pain due to lumbar disc degeneration.

Materials and methods
This study was conducted by the Department of Orthopaedics, Kanachur Institute of Medical Sciences, Mangalore. The study was done in thirty four cases. There were 19 males and 15 females.

Exclusion criteria
Patients who did not consent
Patients who did not turn up after the first injection. (Initially 38 were included)

Inclusion criteria
Patient with atleast 3 months history of pain.

Procedure
15cc of blood was drawn into two 8.5 mL ACD solution A tubes. The blood was then spun in a centrifuge, and the top layer without visible red blood cells was isolated to yield 2-cc PRP. The PRP was then split into 4-cc portions and was added to three 6-cc syringes. 1-cc of Lidocaine was added to each syringe to ensure less post-injection pain and stiffness. The injection sites were sterilized with Chlorhexidine solution. The PRP was injected by the physician in Operation theatre under the guidance of C-Arm image intensifier. The needle passed through the transforaminal route to the desired disc space as determined by patient’s clinical examination and MRI findings, shown in figure 1.

The outcomes of interest in this study were changes to resting pain and active pain (numerical pain scale [NPS]), overall improvement (percentage scale), and function (scored questionnaire which was validated).

| Activities                                      | Almost impossible | More Difficult | Moderate Difficult | A little Difficult | Absolutely no difficulty |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Usual routine activities at job/home           | 1                 | 2              | 3                  | 4                  | 5                      |
| Extra-curricular                               | 1                 | 2              | 3                  | 4                  | 5                      |
| Standing up for extended period of time        | 1                 | 2              | 3                  | 4                  | 5                      |
| Lifting heavy things                           | 1                 | 2              | 3                  | 4                  | 5                      |
| Bending and working                            | 1                 | 2              | 3                  | 4                  | 5                      |
| Squatting                                      | 1                 | 2              | 3                  | 4                  | 5                      |
| Walking for 1000 steps                         | 1                 | 2              | 3                  | 4                  | 5                      |
| Walking up stairs                              | 1                 | 2              | 3                  | 4                  | 5                      |
| Pain while sleeping                            | 1                 | 2              | 3                  | 4                  | 5                      |
| Standing to sitting position                   | 1                 | 2              | 3                  | 4                  | 5                      |

Resting pain from 0 to 10
Active pain from 0 to 10
Improvement in percent.

Results

Table 1: Mean age of the subject

| Mean age | Std deviation |
|----------|---------------|
| 56.39 years | ±5.56 years |

Table 2: Score based on validated questionnaire

| Score | Before Study started | After treatment | p-value |
|-------|----------------------|-----------------|---------|
| 10-50 | 24.26                | 41.28           | <0.001 (Sig) |

Table 3: Resting pain

| Score | Before Study started | After treatment | p-value |
|-------|----------------------|-----------------|---------|
| 0-10  | 6.19                 | 2.67            | <0.001 (Sig) |

Table 4: Active Pain

| Score | Before Study started | After treatment | p-value |
|-------|----------------------|-----------------|---------|
| 0-10  | 8.27                 | 2.29            | <0.001 (Sig) |

Table 5: Total Improvement

| Score | After treatment | p-value |
|-------|-----------------|---------|
| 0-100%| 61.28%          | <0.001 (Sig) |

Discussion
Platelet rich plasma is isolated using one’s own blood and it contains important cytokines and other inflammatory mediators that are important in modulating inflammation and this leads to angiogenesis, cell migration and proliferation of the inflammatory cells, all of these are absolutely important in the healing process [15]. Low back pain (LBP) is now regarded as the first cause of disability worldwide and should be a priority for future research on prevention and therapy. Intervertebral disc (IVD) degeneration is an important pathogenesis of LBP. Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) is an autologous blood concentrate that contains a natural concentration of autologous growth factors and cytokines and is currently widely used in the clinical setting for tissue regeneration and repair. PRP has great potential to stimulate cell proliferation and metabolic activity of IVD cells in vitro. Several animal studies have shown that the injection of PRP...
into degenerated IVDs is effective in restoring structural changes (IVD height) and improving the matrix integrity of degenerated IVDs as evaluated by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and histology. The results of this basic research have shown the great possibility that PRP has significant biological effects for tissue repair to counteract IVD degeneration. Clinical studies for evaluating the effects of the injection of PRP into degenerated IVDs for patients with discogenic LBP have been reviewed. Although there was only one double-blind randomized controlled trial, all the studies reported that PRP was safe and effective in reducing back pain. While the clinical evidence of tissue repair of IVDs by PRP treatment is currently lacking, there is a great possibility that the application of PRP has the potential to lead to a feasible intradiscal therapy for the treatment of degenerative disc diseases. Further large-scale studies may be required to confirm the clinical evidence of PRP for the treatment of discogenic LBP.

**Conclusion**

PRP therapy reduced pain and increased functionality in patients with chronic non-specific Lower back pain.

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