A STUDY OF SILVER NITRATE SOLUTION IN DRESSING OF DIABETIC FOOT ULCER

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND
Diabetic foot ulcer is very common nowadays. It ranges from 15% to 25%. Various methods and dressing agents have been tried for dressing. In this study, silver nitrate in solution form as a dressing agent has been tried.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
A prospective study was conducted at MKCG Medical College, Berhampur, Odisha. Here, a total of 100 number of patients having diabetic foot ulcer were studied and consent for various procedures were obtained from them. Data regarding granulation tissue formation, pus culture and sensitivity report, skin graft acceptance and hospital stay were analysed in tabular manner.

RESULTS
Among 100 study subjects, 50 were taken as control group and 50 as study group. The granulation tissue formation on 14th day was 95% in study group and 82% in control group. Successful skin graft uptake was 94% in study group and 80% in control group. Hospital stay in study group was 25.6 ± 3.4 days and 35.3 ± 7.2 days. Pus culture sensitivity test on day 14 was positive in 6 cases in study group and 12 cases in control group.

CONCLUSION
Foot ulcer is a common problem worldwide, among which diabetic foot ulcer is the commonest one. Various modalities of dressing methods and materials are available, but in my study silver nitrate in the form of solution form is a better option as compared to others.

KEYWORDS
Diabetic Foot Ulcer, Silver Nitrate, Granulation Tissue, Skin Graft.

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Exclusion Criteria
1. Chronic ulcers due to other aetiology.
2. Grade III, IV, V foot ulcers as per Meggitt-Wagner classification.
3. Immunocompromised state like HIV.
4. Age less than 15 yrs.
5. Patients with varicose vein and decreased vascularity (ischaemia) of lower limb.
6. Patients with allergy to silver nitrate.

After satisfying inclusion and exclusion criteria, the selective patients were randomly assigned to study group and control group. Each patient participating in the clinical trial signed on informed consent form, though one had the right to withdraw without any prejudice at any point of time. In all cases, detailed history was taken. History of IHD (Ischaemic Heart Disease), other chronic systemic ailments, smoking and alcohol drinking was asked and recorded. The site, depth and duration of ulcer were recorded. In all patients haemoglobin, DC (Differential Count), TLC (Total Leucocyte Count), FBS (Fasting Blood Glucose), PPBS (Postprandial blood glucose), blood urea and creatinine were routinely done. Urine routine and microscopic examination was done. After slough removal the surface were measured, tracing the outline on transparent paper. This outline was transferred to graph paper and size was measured in both control and study group.

In study group, 2 mL of silver nitrate solution was taken in a syringe after cleaning the wound with distilled water, drying it with sterile gauze and then the silver nitrate solution was sprinkled over the wound surface. After this the wound was covered with gauze soaked with silver nitrate solution, whereas in control group dressing was done by 50% w/v povidone-iodine solution. Dressings were done and followed every alternate day for 14 days. Size of ulcers was measured weekly. Wound culture was done on day 1 and on day 14, observed side effect (local and systemic) were documented. The results obtained were statistically evaluated and compared on following points.

1. Effect of silver nitrate solution on bacterial load in the wound.
2. Rate of granulation tissue formation.
3. No. of days required for healing.
4. Skin graft uptake.
5. Side effect of topical silver nitrate dressing.

Variables were compared using the chi-square t-test and ‘p’ value was obtained and found to be significant.

RESULTS
Study included 100 patients and maximum no. of cases belonged to age group 40 to 60 years. In the above study, the number of males (68) were more in comparison to females (32). In control group, 8 patients (16%) had ulcer size < 5 cm; 12 patients (24%) had ulcer between 5 - 10 cm and 5 patients (10%) had ulcer size > 10 cm. In study group, 10 patients (20%) had ulcer size < 5 cm; 8 patients (16%) had ulcer size 5 - 10 cm and 7 patients (14%) had ulcer size > 10 cm.

The rate of granulation tissue formation was assessed on 14th day and mean granulation tissue was 95% in study group and 82% in control group. The result was analysed using Yate’s chi-square test and was found to be significant (p < 0.001) (Table 1).

| Granulation Tissue | Study N=50 | Control N=50 | P-value (Yate’s Chi-Square) |
|--------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| 71% - 80%          | 19         | 4            | 25.42, p < 0.001            |
| 81% - 90%          | 24         | 14           |                             |
| 91% - 100%         | 7          | 32           |                             |
| Total              | 50         | 50           |                             |

Table 1. Granulation Tissue Formation as on 14th Day

After granulation tissue formulation, the patients in both groups were subjected to split thickness skin grafting and graft uptake was again measured on the 7th post-operative day as the % of ulcer surface area mentioned in the table below. In study group, 94% successful graft was observed and in control group it was found to be 80%. The result was analysed using Yate’s chi-square test, which showed to be highly significant (p= 0.001) (Table 2).

| Graft Uptake | Study N=50 | Control N=50 | P-value (Yate’s Chi-Square) |
|--------------|------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| < 70%        | 13         | 5            | 24.46, P < 0.001            |
| 71% - 80%    | 7          | 8            |                             |
| 81% - 90%    | 28         | 13           |                             |
| 91% - 100%   | 2          | 24           |                             |
| Total        | 50         | 50           |                             |

Table 2. Graft Uptake

Hospital stay for both groups were calculated and compared. Hospital stay for study group was 25.32 ± 3.13 days and in control group was 35.00 ± 2.57 days. The results were obtained using Independent sample t-test, which was found to be highly significant (p= 0.001) (Table 3).

| Duration of Hospital Stay | Study N=50 | Control N=50 | P-value (Independent sample T test) |
|---------------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Mean ± SD                 | 25.32 ± 3.13, SEM=0.44 | 35.00 ± 2.57, SEM=0.36 | P < 0.001                       |

Table 3. Hospital Stay

Difference in mean duration of hospital stay between the control and study group is 9.68 days (95% CI 8.54 - 10.82)

Patients of both groups were subjected to culture and sensitivity test and antibiotics were adjusted accordingly. After 14 days again, culture and sensitivity test was done and a significant result was obtained in study group who
were subjected to silver nitrate solution (p= 0.118) (Table 5).

| Result | Control N=50 | Study N=50 | P-value (Chi-Square Test) |
|--------|--------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Positive | 24 | 16 | 2.66, p= 0.102 |
| Negative | 26 | 34 |                               |
| Total   | 50  | 50 |                               |

**Table 4. Bacterial Culture Report on Day 1**

| Result | Control N=50 | Study N=50 | P-value (Chi-Square Test) |
|--------|--------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Positive | 12 | 6 | 2.43, p= 0.118 |
| Negative | 38 | 44 |                               |
| Total   | 50  | 50 |                               |

**Table 5. Bacterial Culture Report on Day 14**

**DISCUSSION**

Management of diabetic foot ulcer is a challenge to every treating surgeon. As newer dressing materials have come, it is necessary to identify the cheapest and effective one for dressing the diabetic ulcer.

In this study the dressing material is silver nitrate in liquid form, though in ointment base form its efficacy has already been proved. But it is better in liquid form and its response has been tried in my study.

This study is similar to Muthu Kumar Swamy MG et al, who tried with phenytoin and Pukar I et al who studied with newer dressing material (oxum, opsite, collagen, oxoferin).

In my study, mean age group in study group were 48 and 50 years in control group. Graft uptake was 93% and 76% respectively. Hospital stay was 25 days and 35 days respectively. My study was also compared with other studies like Pendse et al, Lodha et al and Bansal et al.

**Limitation of the Study** - A small sample size is itself a major limitation in the above study. A randomised control trial study with a larger population may have help to further strengthen the findings or may reveal variations. The factors which also may affect wound healing like alcohol intake, smoking, time duration and glycaemic control in diabetes mellitus were not compared and analysed in this study.

**CONCLUSION**

Silver nitrate in liquid form is newer concept in management of wound healing. It enhances granulation tissue formation and reduces bacterial load in the wound. Hence, better management after skin grafting, which also shortens the hospital stay for diabetic foot ulcer patients.

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