Role of topical insulin therapy in amputation stump

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Abstract

Wound healing is a complex process with overlapping steps of haemostasis, the inflammatory and proliferative phases, remodelling. Any problem with the edge of the wound can be detrimental to healing and may cause delay in wound healing. In this article, we share our experience of using topical insulin therapy for wound bed preparation in non-healing ulcer over the amputation stump.

Key words: topical insulin, amputation stump

Introduction

Wound bed preparation is a new concept and is done using the T.I.M.E method. The Edge is a component that involves granulation tissue for better healing. Recently we have come across the application of topical insulin therapy for the management of non-healing ulcer, and we share our experience.

Materials and methods: This study was conducted in the department of Plastic Surgery at tertiary care center after obtaining the departmental ethical committee approval. Informed written consent was taken from patient in study. The details of the patient in study are as follows: 37 year old female with no known co morbidities with h/o road traffic accident 4 months back and underwent right below knee amputation due to vascular injury and degloving injury of the left lower limb for which serial debridement was done in cardiothoracic and general surgery department. Now, the patient presented to plastic surgery department with extensive raw area over the left lower limb and non-healing ulcer over the right below knee amputation stump.

Figure 1: wound over the amputation stump
The regular dressings and antibiotic changes did not lead to wound healing. Wound bed preparation was done using the patient with topical insulin therapy (figure 2).

0.1ml of regular insulin was injected or sprayed onto 1cm² of the wound when the regular dressing was performed (figure 3). This was repeated once every 3-5 days when the dressing was changed. The wound was reassessed after 2 weeks for evidence of wound healing. The wound showed healing as evidenced by healthy granulation tissue. (figure 3)

Role of topical insulin in wound healing has appeared in literature since 1970s [1]. Studies done have found that topical Insulin therapy exerts its effects through the IGF 1 receptor. Insulin is known to stimulate keratinocytes and endothelial proliferation leading to a faster neovascularization as well as formation of granulation tissue [2]. Topical insulin application rapidly induces up regulation of the insulin related proteins on wound areas following injury. IRS-1 binds the PI3-kinase, through the multiple tyrosine phosphorylated sites [3-4].

Insulin triggers keratinocyte migration depending on the dose and time in the chronic wounds. Insulin demonstrates its effect by an insulin receptor dependent but EGF/EGF-R non-dependent way. It increases the keratinocyte migration on the PI3K-Akt-Rac1 pathway, cause stimulation of keratinocytes by enabling the production of α3 and LN332 molecules is proved in vitro studies [6, 7, 8, 9]. Insulin is a hormone that also has effect on collagen production. Insulin selectively and strongly stimulates the collagen production in dermal fibroblasts [10, 11]. The cost of insulin ranges from 130-500 INR per vial.

Conclusion
Topical insulin therapy was found to be useful in management of non-healing ulcer as it improved the granulation tissue. Long-term clinical observations are needed to determine whether topical insulin can be used for wound bed preparation.

Limitations
This was done on a single patient and needs large population based study to apply the finding in clinical practice.

Conflict of interest none
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