The Attitudes of Patients Towards Orthopaedic Post-Surgical Scars

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Introduction

Post-surgical scars (PSS) are an inevitable consequence of surgical intervention. However, they may impair patient quality of life (QoL) due to functional limitations and cosmetic concerns.

Little data is available regarding patients’ attitudes towards orthopaedic PSS. Knowledge regarding same will allow physicians to administer pre- and post-operative care to mitigate potential negative effects of PSS.

Methods

Prospective cohort study on all patients attending orthopaedic fracture clinics in CUH between February and August 2022.

• 2-18 weeks post-operative.
• PSS on their upper or lower limbs.

Collected data via 4 questionnaires:
1. General Information
2. Patient Scar Assessment Scale (PSAS)
3. European Quality of Life 5 Domain
4. Likert Scales

Follow up questionnaires at 6/12 post-operative via telephone.

Results

Mean patient age: 46.67 years (Range 14-79).
Mean scar age at initial visit: 9 weeks

Most common operation was Open Reduction Internal Fixation.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>(n=90)</th>
<th>Initial OPD (2-18 weeks)</th>
<th>6 months</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>value</td>
<td>value</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean PSAS (6−60)</td>
<td>28.41</td>
<td>18.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall Opinion (1−10)</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>4.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>EQ-5D (-.594 −1)</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.786</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

People who agreed that “The scar is worse than my expectations for it” were more likely to agree that:

• “My choice of clothing is affected by my scar.” (Rho=0.464, p=0.001)
• “I am self conscious about my scar.” (Rho=0.474, p=0.001)
• “The scar is affecting my quality of life.” (Rho=0.557, p=0.001)

Younger scar age is associated with poorer Quality of Life. (EQ-5D) (Rho=0.259, p=0.014)

Younger patient age is associated with poorer Overall Opinion of scar. (Rho=-0.258, p=0.014)

Limitations

Initial patient injury may confound EQ-5D scores. However, we included several Likert scales that examine scar specific QoL.

Several patients refused to participate, saying “I don’t care at all about my scar” -> exclusion bias.

Conclusion

A minority of patients remain dissatisfied with their PSS.

This study identifies several factors associated with patient orthopaedic PSS satisfaction consistent with established surgical literature [1,2].

Knowledge of said factors can lead to the implementation of targeted interventions to mitigate negative effects of PSS. These include:

• Emphasising adequate tissue handling & wound closure
• Patient expectation management
• Wound care education & reassurance

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References