



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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تم رفع هذه الرسالة بواسطة / حسام الدين محمد مغربي

بقسم التوثيق الإلكتروني بمركز الشبكات وتكنولوجيا المعلومات دون أدنى

مسئولية عن محتوى هذه الرسالة.

ملاحظات : لا يوجد



Evaluation of Muco Adhesive Tacrolimus Patch on Caspase-3 Inducing Apoptosis in Oral Lichen Planus

(A Randomized Controlled Clinical Trial with Immuno Histochemical Analysis)

*Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Dentistry, Ain-Shams University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in oral medicine*

Presented by

Noha Ahmed Nagy Mohamed

Assistant Lecturer, Faculty of Oral and Dental Medicine, Future University in Egypt

B.D.S 2007 (Ain-Shams University)

M.D.S 2016 (Ain-Shams University)

Supervisors

Prof. Dr. Suzan Seif Allah Ibrahim

Professor of Oral Medicine, Periodontology and Oral Diagnosis

Faculty of Dentistry, Ain-Shams University,

Dean of Faculty of Oral and Dental Medicine, NAHDA University

Prof. Dr. Nivine Ibrahim Ragy

Vice President for education and student affairs of Future University in Egypt

Professor of Oral Medicine, Periodontology and Oral Diagnosis

Ass. Prof. Dr. Ola Mohamed Ezzatt Hassaneen

Assistant Professor of Oral Medicine, Periodontology and Oral Diagnosis

Faculty of Dentistry, Ain Shams University

Ass.Prof.Dr. Hala Ahmed Mohamed El-kammar

Assistant Professor of Oral Pathology, acting Vice Dean

n and student affairs,

Faculty of Oral and Dental Medicine, Future University in Egypt

for education

Ass. Prof. Dr. Asmaa Mohamed El Bakry Mohamed

Assistant Professor of Pharmaceuticals and Industrial Pharmacology,

Faculty of Pharmacy, Al Azhar University

FACULTY OF DENTISTRY

AIN SHAMS UNIVERSITY

2022

Acknowledgment

Thanks to God before and after. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to ***prof. Dr. Suzan Sief Allah Ibrahim***, Professor of Oral Medicine, Periodontology and Oral Diagnosis, Faculty of Dentistry, Ain Shams University, for her valuable directions and persistent kind supervision, help and care throughout this work.

Much of appreciation and gratitude is expressed to ***prof. Dr. Nivine Ibrahim Ragy***, Professor of Oral Medicine, Periodontology and Oral Diagnosis, Faculty of Oral and Dental Medicine, Cairo University, for her patient guidance, encouragement throughout this study and continuous support throughout my professional career.

Much of appreciation and gratitude are expressed to ***Ass. Prof. Ola Mohamed Ezzatt***, Assistant Professor of Oral Medicine, Periodontology and Oral Diagnosis, Faculty of Dentistry, Ain Shams University who was abundantly helpful, and offered invaluable support and guidance.

I am greatly indebted to ***Ass. Prof. Hala Ahmed El Kammar***, Assistant Professor of Oral Pathology, Faculty of Oral and Dental Medicine, Future University in Egypt, for supervising the histopathological and immunohistochemical analysis. Her role was axial and essential to get the results in a proper way.

My thanks to ***Ass. Prof. Asmaa Mohamed ElBakry***, Assistant professor of pharmaceuticals and industrial pharmacology for her help and support.

Lastly I would like to thank the patients who participated in the study for their volunteer character and appreciations to the value of medical research.

CONTENTS

Page

Introduction.....1

Review of Literature5

Aim of the study38

Patients and methods39

Results59

Discussion.....87

Conclusions.....10

3

Recommendations.....1

04

Summary.....10

5

References.....10

7

Arabic summary.....

Appendix.....

...

List of Abbreviations

Anti-HCV: Anti-hepatitis C virus

ACEIs: Angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors

AV: Aloe vera

BCL-2: B-cell lymphoma-2

BCL-KL: B-cell lymphoma-KL

BM: Basement membrane

CMC: carboxy methyl cellulose

C3: complement component 3

C4: complement component 4

CD8: Cluster of differentiation 8

CD4: Cluster of differentiation 4

CD95L: Fas Ligand

CD95: Fas

CS: Clinical Score

ER: Endoplasmic reticulum

Fas-L: Fas Ligand

FK506: Tacrolimus

GVHD: Graft versus host disease

HPA: hypothalamus pituitary adrenal axis

HCV: hepatitis C virus

HLA: Human leukocyte antigen

HLA-DR: Human Leukocyte Antigen- DR isotype

HPMC: Hydroxypropyl Methyl Cellulose

H&E: Hematoxylin and Eosin

IGM: immunoglobulin M

IL-2: Interleukin-2

IFN- α : Interferon gamma

ICAM-1: Intercellular Adhesion molecule 1

MMP-9: Matrix Metalloproteinase

MCL: Apoptosis regulator protein

MHC: Major histocompatibility complex

MMP: Matrix metalloproteinase

MAF: Mean area fraction

NIH: National institutes of health

NSAIDs: Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs

NFAT: Nuclear factor of activated T cells

NF-KB: Nuclear factor kappa B

OLP: Oral Lichen Planus

OSCC: Oral squamous cell carcinoma

OLL: Oral lichenoid lesions

OLDR: Oral lichenoid drug reactions

OLCL: Oral lichenoid contact lesions

P53: Tumor suppressor gene

PKB: Protein kinase B

PDT: Photo dynamic therapy

RCT: randomized controlled trials

RNA: ribonucleic acid

RCA R: Regulators of complement of ABA receptor

RCA: Regulators of complement of ABA

SCC: squamous cell carcinoma

TIMP: tissue inhibitor metalloproteinase

TCR: T cell receptor

Treg: regulatory T cells

TH1: T helper 1

TH2: T helper 2

TNF: Tumor necrosis factor

TAA: Total Atrophic area

TNSIs: Tacrolimus non-steroidal inhibitors

TLC: Total lymphocytic count

VCAM-1: Vascular cell adhesion molecule 1

VAS: Visual analogue scale

WHO: world health organization

List of Figures

	Page
Figure 1: Antigen presentation and T cell activation in OLP.....	15
Figure 2: Mechanism of apoptosis of basal keratinocytes.....	16
Figure 3: Roles of caspase-3 in apoptosis.....	18
Figure 4: List of therapies according to effectiveness for OLP	
Treatment.....	23
Figure 5: The effect of calcineurin inhibitors on T-cell activation	
And metabolism.....	30
Figure 6: Yellowish white tacrolimus muco-adhesive patch.....	44
Figure 7: a) Tacrolimus oral gel dispensed in plastic syringes	
b) Triamcinolone acetone gel dispensed in plastic syringes..	45
Figure 8: a) A sterile single use biopsy punch	
b) Biopsy place within the marker lesion.....	47

Figure 9: Tacrolimus mucoadesive patch applied on marker lesion	
In group I.....	49
Figure 10: Oral gel applied on marker lesion.....	49
Figure 11: Steps of image analysis of marker lesion.....	52
Figure 12: Steps of image analysis of photomicrographs.....	57
Figure 13: Mean CS in different intervals.....	63
Figure 14: Mean percent change in CS in different intervals.....	64
Figure 15: Mean total atrophic area in different intervals.....	67
Figure 16: Mean percent change in total atrophic area in different	
Intervals.....	68
Figure 17: Mean VAS in different intervals.....	70
Figure 18: Mean percent change in VAS in different intervals.....	71
Figure 19: OLP lesion treated by tacrolimus patch (GroupI).....	72
Figure 20: OLP lesion treated by tacrolimus gel (GroupII).....	73
Figure 21: OLP lesion treated by corticosteroid gel (GroupIII).....	74
Figure 22: Mean area fraction of caspase-3 gene expression	
In the epithelium.....	76
Figure 23: Mean area fraction of caspase-3 gene expression	
In the connective tissue.....	78
Figure 24: Photomicrograph of OLP specimen at baseline showing	
Immune-positivity of caspase-3 (Group I).....	79
Figure 25: Photomicrograph of OLP specimen after ttt showing	
Immune-positivity of caspase-3 (Group I)	79
Figure 26: Photomicrograph of OLP specimen at baseline showing	
Immune-positivity of caspase-3 (Group II).....	80

Figure 27: Photomicrographs of OLP specimen after ttt showing Immune-positivity of caspase-3 (Group II).....	80
Figure 28: Photomicrograph of OLP specimen at baseline showing Immune-positivity of caspase-3 (Group III).....	81
Figure 29: Photomicrographs of OLP specimen after ttt showing Immune-positivity of caspase-3 (Group III).....	81
Figure 30: Total lymphocyte count before and after treatment in three groups	83
Figure 31: Photomicrograph of OLP specimen at baseline (Group I).....	84
Figure 32: Photomicrograph of OLP specimen after ttt (Group I).....	84
Figure 33: Photomicrograph of OLP specimen at baseline (Group II).....	85
Figure 34: Photomicrograph of OLP specimen after ttt (Group II).....	85
Figure 35: Photomicrograph of OLP specimen at baseline (Group III).....	86
Figure 36: Photomicrograph of OLP specimen after ttt (Group III).....	86

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1: Baseline characteristics of the study population in	

in different groups.....	61
Table 2: Descriptive statistics and test of significance for CS	
Of marker lesion in different groups	63
Table 3: Mean percent change in CS in different intervals.....	64
Table 4: Descriptive statistics and test of significance for TAA	
Of marker lesion in different groups.....	66
Table 5: Percent change of TAA marker lesion in different	
intervals.....	68
Table 6: Descriptive statistics and test of significance for VAS	
In different groups.....	69
Table 7: Mean percent change in VAS in different intervals.....	71
Table 8: Mean area fraction of caspase-3 gene expression in	
The epithelium in the three groups.....	76
Table 9: Mean area fraction of caspase-3 gene expression in	
The connective tissue in the three groups.....	78
Table 10: T-Lymphocyte count before and after treatment in the	
Three groups.....	83

INTRODUCTION

Oral lichen planus (OLP) is a T-cell-mediated and chronic inflammatory disorder affecting the oral mucosa, with a higher incidence in women and age range varies around the world. However, it is rare in children (**Drogoszewska et al,2014**). Moreover, smokers and patients who abuse alcohol have a higher prevalence of OLP (**Mozaffari et al,2016**).

OLP occurs in a wide range of clinical forms, usually bilateral, or less frequent unilateral. There are six types of OLP lesions: Reticular, papular, plaque-like-white forms, atrophic (erythematous), erosive (ulcerated) and bullous-red forms. Clinical types of OLP may occur alone or in various combinations (**Canto et al, 2010; Cheng et al, 2016**).

Microscopically, OLP is characterized by dense sub epithelial lymphocytic infiltrate and degeneration of basal keratinocytes (**Roopashree et al,2010**). Apoptotic keratinocytes (Civatte/Colloid bodies) are seen by

light microscope as shrunken cells with condensed nuclei and eosinophilic cytoplasm (**Tobon et al,2004**).

Factors which are involved in the induction of apoptosis in OLP includes tumor suppressor gene P53, B cell lymphoma BCL-2 family protein, Fas/FasL pathway, proteases of the matrix metalloproteinase-9 (MMP-9) and caspase-3 (**Sugerman et al,2000**).

Caspases are cysteine-proteases and are required for programmed cell death. Two principal pathways to caspase activation are identified extrinsic and intrinsic one; The extrinsic pathway is triggered by attachment of “death receptors”; Tumor Necrosis Factor [TNF] family, TNF-1 and FasL on the cell surface. The intrinsic pathway is triggered by various forms of stress, including inadequate cytokine support and different types of intracellular damage (**Adams,2003**).

Different medications have been used in the form of topical or systemic agents for the treatment of OLP including corticosteroids, immunosuppressive, retinoids and immunomodulatory agents (**Sonia et al,2015**). However, various treatment protocols have been developed to control symptomatic OLP but a permanent cure is not yet available (**Sun,2019**).

Reviews concerning OLP therapy recommend high potency topical corticosteroids as the treatment of choice, and indicated clobetasol propionate to be the most effective topical steroid, however refractory lesions to steroids needed alternative medications (**Lodi et al,2005; Mahdi,2019**).

Topical immunomodulators, including both tacrolimus and pimecrolimus, are recent modalities to the therapeutic management of OLP, adverse effects of tacrolimus were generally minor and transient and didn't affect continued medication (**Su et al, 2022**).

Tacrolimus, is a potent immunosuppressant macrolide antibiotic produced by *Streptomyces Tsukubaensis* (**Greaf et al ,1999**). It inhibits the first phase of T-cell activation, inhibiting the phosphatase activity of calcineurin (**Gupta et al,2003**).

Topical 0.1% tacrolimus gel was effective in the treatment of symptomatic oral lichen planus, and its systemic absorption was minimum and the serum concentration were low or even undetected (**Sosa, 2019**).

The use of currently available topical formulations has few limitations like reduced patient compliance and salivary washout, in contrast, muco-adhesive buccal film which provided the advantage of advanced retention time, increased patient compliance, prolonged release of the drug and better bioavailability at site of action (**Ashwathy et al, 2019**).

Based on the previous mentioned mechanism of action of tacrolimus and advantages of muco-adhesive patch, we hypothesized that tacrolimus loaded in muco-adhesive patch could improve clinical results and patient compliance more than the triamcinolone acetonide topical gel in management of symptomatic OLP.

To the best of our knowledge, there is one published preclinical study concerning the use of mucoadhesive patches for local delivery of clobetasol to oral mucosa (**Colley,2018**) and one study demonstrating the development and characterization of muco-adhesive patches as a carrier for tacrolimus for oral mucosal delivery (**Ashwathy et al, 2019**).

Thus, the aim of this randomized controlled clinical trial was to evaluate the clinical efficacy of tacrolimus 0.1% in muco-adhesive patch compared to tacrolimus or corticosteroids in gel form for symptomatic oral lichen planus and to investigate their effect on the expression of caspase 3 in oral lichen planus as an early marker of apoptosis using immune histochemical analysis.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was:

- 1- To evaluate the clinical efficacy of tacrolimus 0.1% in mucoadhesive patch compared to tacrolimus or corticosteroids in gel forms for symptomatic oral lichen planus **(Primary Objective)**.

- 2- To investigate the effect of topical tacrolimus or corticosteroid on the expression of caspase-3 in oral lichen planus lesions as an early marker of apoptosis using immunohistochemical analysis **(Secondary Objective)**.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lichen planus is an inflammatory immune mediated vesiculo-bullous muco-cutaneous disease affecting skin and mucous membranes, it could also