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The Efficacy of Microneedling with Topical Insulin in Striae Distensae Management

Dina Esmat Hamed[1] , Heba Ayman Elsayed Zaher [2]

1 Lecturer of Dermatology, Venereology and Andrology, Faculty of Medicine Zagazig University

2 M.B; B.CH.;cairo dermatology and leprosy clinic, Resident of Dermatology, Venereology and Andrology

Corresponding author: Heba Ayman Elsayed Zaher

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Abstract: Background: Striae distensae (SD), commonly referred to as stretch marks, are a frequent dermatological concern with limited treatment options. Recent advancements in minimally invasive techniques have highlighted the potential of microneedling in promoting dermal remodeling and enhancing the transdermal delivery of therapeutic agents. This review examines the efficacy of microneedling combined with topical insulin in the management of SD. Insulin, a peptide hormone with proven regenerative and anti-inflammatory properties, has demonstrated promising results in wound healing and tissue repair. By leveraging the microchannels created during microneedling, insulin delivery to deeper dermal layers may amplify its therapeutic effects, promoting collagen production and dermal restructuring. We systematically analyze preclinical and clinical studies evaluating this combination therapy, addressing its mechanisms of action, safety profile, and clinical outcomes. Furthermore, the review highlights the comparative effectiveness of this approach versus conventional treatments, such as retinoids, chemical peels, and laser therapy. Current evidence suggests that microneedling with topical insulin is a well-tolerated and effective intervention, offering significant improvements in SD appearance and patient satisfaction. However, larger randomized controlled trials are warranted to confirm these findings and standardize treatment protocols. This review underscores the potential of this novel therapy to redefine the management paradigm for SD, bridging the gap between efficacy and safety in dermatological practice.

Keywords: *Microneedling, Topical Insulin, Striae Distensae*

Introduction.

Striae distensae, commonly known as stretch marks, are a frequent dermatological concern that can significantly impact an individual's quality of life. These lesions often develop on areas of the body subject to rapid stretching, such as the abdomen, thighs, and breasts. Although they are not physically harmful, their appearance can cause considerable psychological distress [1].

The etiology of striae distensae is multifactorial, with mechanical stretching of the skin being a primary factor. Hormonal influences, particularly elevated levels of glucocorticoids, play a significant role in their development

[2]. These hormones lead to a reduction in fibroblast activity and decreased synthesis of collagen and elastin, which are critical components of skin elasticity [3].

Histologically, striae distensae show significant alterations in the dermal layer of the skin. Studies reveal a reduction in collagen and elastin fibers, as well as structural abnormalities in the extracellular matrix [4]. These changes contribute to the skin's reduced capacity to recover after mechanical stretching.

There are two primary types of striae distensae: striae rubrae and striae albae. Striae rubrae are the early-stage lesions characterized by erythematous and raised appearances, while striae albae are mature, hypopigmented, and atrophic scars [5].

Various risk factors have been identified for the development of striae distensae. Pregnancy is one of the most common triggers, with approximately 50-90% of pregnant women experiencing stretch marks [6]. Other contributing factors include obesity, rapid weight gain, and certain medical conditions such as Cushing's syndrome and Marfan syndrome [7].

Preventative measures for striae distensae often focus on maintaining skin hydration and elasticity. Topical formulations containing hyaluronic acid, centella asiatica, and vitamin E have shown potential benefits in reducing the risk and severity of stretch marks [8].

Despite preventative efforts, striae distensae remain challenging to treat effectively. Several therapeutic modalities have been explored, including topical retinoids, which promote collagen synthesis and skin remodeling [9].

Laser therapy is another prominent option for managing striae distensae. Pulsed dye lasers and fractional laser treatments have demonstrated efficacy in improving the appearance of both striae rubrae and striae albae [10]. These therapies work by stimulating dermal remodeling and promoting collagen production [11].

Microneedling has gained popularity as a minimally invasive treatment for striae distensae. This technique induces controlled micro-injuries to the skin, stimulating the natural wound-healing process and enhancing collagen production [12].

Radiofrequency therapy has also emerged as a promising modality for striae management. By delivering heat to the dermis, this technique promotes skin tightening and collagen synthesis [13].

Chemical peels, particularly those using trichloroacetic acid (TCA), have been employed to improve the texture and pigmentation of striae distensae. These peels facilitate the exfoliation of damaged skin layers and promote dermal renewal [14].

Combination therapies have been investigated to enhance treatment outcomes for striae distensae. For instance, combining microneedling with platelet-rich plasma (PRP) has shown synergistic effects in improving skin texture and elasticity [15].

The role of nutritional interventions in managing striae distensae has also been explored. Adequate intake of vitamins C and E, along with zinc and protein, is essential for maintaining skin health and promoting healing [16].

Emerging treatments, such as stem cell therapy and growth factor-based formulations, hold promise for more effective management of striae distensae. Preliminary studies suggest that these approaches may enhance skin regeneration and repair [17].

Psychological support is crucial for individuals affected by striae distensae, particularly those experiencing significant emotional distress. Counseling and support groups can help individuals cope with the psychosocial impact of these lesions [18]. Further research is needed to better understand the pathophysiology of striae distensae and to develop more effective prevention and treatment strategies. Advances in molecular biology and regenerative medicine may pave the way for novel therapeutic options [19]. Educational initiatives aimed at raising awareness about striae distensae and their management can empower individuals to seek appropriate care and adopt preventive measures [20].

Topical Insulin in Dermatology

Topical insulin, a novel approach in dermatology, has shown promise in enhancing wound healing and managing a variety of skin disorders. Insulin's potent metabolic and growth-promoting properties make it a

suitable candidate for cutaneous applications. Despite its primary association with glycemic control, its off-label use in dermatology is gaining attention due to encouraging preclinical and clinical outcomes [21].

The therapeutic effects of insulin on the skin are primarily attributed to its anabolic properties. It stimulates keratinocyte migration, fibroblast proliferation, and collagen synthesis. Additionally, insulin facilitates angiogenesis by enhancing endothelial cell activity, promoting vascularization, which is crucial for wound healing. These mechanisms collectively contribute to the repair and regeneration of damaged skin tissues [22].

Insulin's role in wound healing is well-documented. Topical application has been found to reduce inflammation, accelerate re-epithelialization, and enhance granulation tissue formation. This makes it particularly effective for chronic wounds, such as diabetic foot ulcers, where impaired healing poses significant clinical challenges [23].

Patients with diabetic ulcers benefit greatly from topical insulin therapy. Studies have demonstrated significant reductions in wound size and faster closure rates compared to standard care. This is achieved without systemic side effects, as insulin's localized application minimizes the risk of hypoglycemia [24].

Topical insulin has also been evaluated for burn injuries. It reduces inflammatory cytokines and oxidative stress while promoting dermal regeneration. This dual action aids in faster healing and reduces scarring, making it a promising adjunct in burn management [25].

Postoperative wound care is another area where topical insulin shows potential. By enhancing fibroblast activity and reducing bacterial colonization, insulin accelerates the healing of surgical wounds, thereby lowering the risk of complications such as infections and delayed closure [26].

Emerging evidence suggests that insulin may also be beneficial in inflammatory skin disorders like psoriasis. Its anti-inflammatory properties help modulate cytokine activity, potentially reducing the severity of psoriatic plaques and improving skin texture [27].

Insulin's ability to regulate sebaceous gland activity has been explored in acne management. It reduces sebum production and inflammation, addressing two key factors in acne pathogenesis. This positions insulin as a potential topical agent for acne-prone skin [28].

The anti-aging potential of insulin lies in its ability to stimulate collagen production and improve skin elasticity. By enhancing cellular turnover and reducing oxidative stress, it promotes a more youthful appearance. However, more research is needed to establish its efficacy and safety in cosmetic dermatology [29].

Topical insulin has shown promise in scar remodeling by improving collagen organization and reducing fibrosis. This is particularly useful for hypertrophic scars and keloids, where current treatments often yield suboptimal results [30].

While topical insulin is generally well-tolerated, potential adverse effects include local irritation, erythema, and rare cases of allergic reactions. Proper formulation and concentration are essential to minimize these risks and enhance patient compliance [31]. Insulin formulations for topical use include gels, creams, and hydrogel dressings. These vehicles ensure adequate penetration and sustained release of the drug, optimizing its therapeutic benefits while reducing systemic absorption [32].

Combining topical insulin with other agents such as growth factors, antimicrobial peptides, or antioxidants can enhance its therapeutic efficacy. Such synergistic approaches are being explored to tackle complex dermatological conditions [33].

Several clinical trials have validated the efficacy of topical insulin in wound care and other dermatological applications. These studies emphasize its role in reducing healing time, improving patient outcomes, and minimizing healthcare costs [34].

The cost-effectiveness of topical insulin is a significant advantage. By reducing hospital stays and the need for advanced wound care products, it offers an affordable solution for managing chronic wounds and other skin conditions [35]. Topical insulin has also been evaluated for pediatric use, particularly in managing burns and traumatic wounds. Its safety profile and efficacy in this population are promising, paving the way for broader clinical applications [36].

Despite its potential, the use of topical insulin is limited by factors such as formulation challenges, variability in patient response, and a lack of standardized protocols. Addressing these issues is critical for its widespread adoption [37]. Future research should focus on optimizing formulations, understanding the long-term safety profile, and exploring novel indications. Additionally, large-scale clinical trials are needed to establish robust evidence for its use in routine dermatological practice [38]. Topical insulin represents a promising advancement in dermatology, offering benefits across a spectrum of conditions. With ongoing research and innovation, it has the potential to become a standard therapeutic option for wound care and other skin disorders [39].

Microneedling with Topical Insulin in Striae Distensae Management

Striae distensae (SD), commonly known as stretch marks, are dermal scars resulting from rapid skin stretching, often associated with pregnancy, obesity, or rapid growth. These marks are characterized by skin atrophy, thinness, and varying pigmentation, posing both aesthetic and psychological concerns for patients. Traditional treatments such as topical retinoids, laser therapy, and chemical peels have provided limited efficacy, necessitating the exploration of novel therapeutic approaches [40].

Microneedling, a minimally invasive procedure, involves the use of fine needles to create controlled micro-injuries in the skin. This technique stimulates collagen production and enhances the penetration of topical agents. When combined with topical insulin, microneedling may amplify regenerative effects due to insulin's mitogenic and reparative properties, making it a promising option for SD management [41].

Topical insulin's mechanism of action includes promoting cellular proliferation, enhancing glucose uptake, and stimulating keratinocyte migration. These effects accelerate wound healing and tissue repair. Its use in dermatological conditions has been gaining attention, particularly in enhancing re-epithelialization in chronic wounds and scars [42].

The combination of microneedling and topical insulin addresses the structural and cellular deficiencies in SD. Microneedling creates microchannels, allowing deeper penetration of insulin into the dermis. This synergistic approach not only enhances collagen synthesis but also improves dermal matrix remodeling, which is essential for SD reduction [43].

Several clinical studies have demonstrated the potential of microneedling in reducing SD's appearance. These studies highlight improvements in skin texture, elasticity, and pigmentation. When used with growth factors or other active agents like insulin, the outcomes are notably superior compared to standalone microneedling [44].

Histological analysis of SD treated with microneedling and topical insulin reveals increased collagen and elastin fibers in the dermis. This supports the hypothesis that insulin's growth-promoting effects complement the micro-injury-induced collagen remodeling, yielding significant skin regeneration [45].

Patient satisfaction is a critical measure in aesthetic procedures. Reports indicate higher satisfaction rates among patients treated with combined microneedling and topical insulin compared to those receiving either treatment alone. Improved skin texture and reduced SD visibility contribute to positive patient outcomes [46].

The safety profile of microneedling with topical insulin is another advantage. Adverse effects are minimal and primarily limited to transient erythema and mild discomfort. These findings are particularly relevant for patients seeking low-risk, non-invasive treatments for SD [47].

Topical insulin's cost-effectiveness enhances its appeal in resource-limited settings. When paired with microneedling, the treatment provides a practical and affordable solution for SD management, addressing a gap in accessible aesthetic treatments [48].

The depth of microneedling plays a pivotal role in treatment outcomes. Studies suggest that needle lengths of 1.5-2.5 mm are optimal for targeting the dermis in SD, ensuring effective collagen induction and topical agent delivery [49].

Insulin's anti-inflammatory properties further contribute to its efficacy in SD treatment. By modulating inflammatory cytokines, insulin reduces oxidative stress and prevents further dermal damage, complementing the reparative effects of microneedling [50].

The duration and frequency of microneedling sessions influence the therapeutic response. A regimen of 4-6 sessions spaced 4 weeks apart has shown significant improvements in SD appearance, with sustained results observed at 6-month follow-ups [51].

Microneedling's ability to enhance transdermal drug delivery underscores its utility in combining with topical agents like insulin. This method overcomes the epidermal barrier, ensuring higher bioavailability of the active agent in the dermis [52].

Comparative studies have revealed that microneedling with topical insulin outperforms other combination therapies, such as microneedling with vitamin C or hyaluronic acid. These findings highlight insulin's superior reparative properties in skin regeneration [53].

The role of oxidative stress in SD development is well-documented. Insulin's antioxidant effects mitigate free radical damage, protecting the skin's structural integrity and complementing microneedling-induced repair mechanisms [54].

Emerging research suggests that microneedling and topical insulin may also address SD's pigmentation irregularities. By promoting even melanin distribution and reducing hyperpigmentation, this combination improves skin tone consistency [55].

Cytokine modulation is a key aspect of insulin's therapeutic action. By reducing pro-inflammatory cytokines and enhancing anti-inflammatory mediators, insulin fosters an environment conducive to dermal healing and regeneration [56].

The integration of microneedling and topical insulin into dermatological practice requires standardized protocols to optimize outcomes. Factors such as needle depth, insulin concentration, and session frequency must be tailored to individual patient needs [57].

Educational initiatives for practitioners can further enhance the adoption of microneedling with topical insulin. Training programs focusing on technique optimization and patient selection criteria are essential for maximizing therapeutic benefits [58].

Future studies should explore the long-term efficacy and safety of microneedling with topical insulin. Such research will provide valuable insights into sustained outcomes and potential applications in other dermatological conditions [59].

The psychosocial impact of SD on patients underscores the need for effective treatments. By restoring skin integrity and aesthetic appeal, microneedling with topical insulin offers significant psychological benefits, improving self-esteem and quality of life [60].

Advances in microneedling devices, such as automated pens, have enhanced procedural precision and efficiency. These innovations, combined with topical insulin, represent a cutting-edge approach in non-invasive dermatological therapy [61].

Microneedling's role in enhancing topical drug efficacy extends beyond insulin. This technique has broad applications in dermatology, underscoring its importance in modern aesthetic medicine [62].

The clinical versatility of microneedling with topical insulin highlights its potential in addressing other atrophic dermatoses. Expanding its indications could further solidify its role in comprehensive skin rejuvenation therapies [63].

The synergistic effects of microneedling and topical insulin demonstrate a paradigm shift in SD management. This combination represents an innovative, effective, and patient-friendly approach, paving the way for future advancements in dermatological care [64].

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