

# Study of refractive changes and recurrence of pterygium by pterygium excision with bare sclera technique and conjunctival limbal autografting

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## Abstract

**Background: Purpose:** To study refractive outcome and recurrence of pterygium, following pterygium excision with bare sclera technique and pterygium excision with conjunctival limbal autografting. **Study design:** Prospective, randomised interventional study. **Methods:** Patient information was noted along with detailed clinical examination, and surgical details. **Results:** It was found that there was significant improvement in the visual acuity following pterygium excision surgery in all the grades of pterygium, where improvement was more as the grade of the pterygium increased. There was reduction in refractive as well as keratometric astigmatism following pterygium excision surgery by both the surgical techniques which commensurates the improvement in visual acuity. However the change in visual acuity and change in the degree of astigmatism was independent of the type of surgery performed and postoperative improvement was found similar in both the techniques. In the above study, the recurrence of pterygium after pterygium excision with bare sclera technique was found to be significantly higher (13.33%) than that of pterygium excision with conjunctival limbal autografting (3.33%). **Conclusions:** In the study, it was found that visual acuity improved after pterygium surgery regardless of the grade of pterygium and type of surgery performed. Reduction in astigmatism after pterygium excision by the two surgical techniques was similar. This study reports a lower recurrence rate with conjunctival autograft with statistical significance. **Keywords:** Astigmatism, Pterygium excision, Recurrence

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Received Date: 27/11/2019 Revised Date: 21/01/2020 Accepted Date: 04/02/2020

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26611/10091335>

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Accessed Date:  
09 March 2020

## INTRODUCTION

Pterygium is a degenerative disease of the ocular surface characterised by conjunctival growth over the cornea forming a triangular shaped fibrovascular tissue. It causes

symptoms such as ocular discomfort, cosmetic problems, decreased visual acuity due to astigmatism. The prevalence of pterygium varies worldwide. Countries located in tropical regions show prevalence rates upto 22%, while countries outside these areas only around 2%.<sup>2</sup> Pterygium induces a significant change in the topography of the cornea, thus inducing significant corneal astigmatism. This results in decreased visual acuity and altered refractive status in the respective eye. Definitive management for pterygium is surgical excision. But, despite of various surgical procedures, recurrence remains a major problem after surgical excision. Several techniques have been described for surgical treatment of pterygium such as avulsion, excision with bare sclera with cauterisation, pterygium excision with adjuvant therapies like beta radiation, thiotepa, mitomycin C, Argon laser, deep

**How to cite this article:** S S Sarawade, Uma Thigale. Study of refractive changes and recurrence of pterygium by pterygium excision with bare sclera technique and conjunctival limbal autografting. *MedPulse International Journal of Ophthalmology*. March 2020; 13(3): 72-77. <https://www.medpulse.in/Ophthalmology/>

dissection, superficial keratectomy, which can be associated or not with conjunctival autograft or amniotic membrane.<sup>3-7</sup> This study was designed to assess prospectively, the change in refractive status and the recurrence rate in pterygium excision with bare sclera technique and conjunctival limbal autografting.

**METHODS**

The study was approved by the institutional ethics committee at Dr.V.M. Medical College. Sixty eyes of sixty patients with a primary pterygium between September 2017 and April 2019 attending the Ophthalmology OPD were enrolled in the study. All patients underwent a complete ophthalmological examination, including slit lamp examination and keratometry. Pterygium was graded according to its encroachment on cornea :Pterygium < 2mm was Grade 1,Pterygium 2-4 mm was Grade 2 and Pterygium > 4 mm was Grade 3 Pterygium. Each patient was randomly assigned to Group A (pterygium excision with bare sclera technique with cauterisation) and Group B

(Pterygium excision with conjunctival limbal autografting secured with sutures). Group A patients underwent pterygium excision in which the tenon’s and subepithelial fibrovascular tissue was carefully and completely dissection. The sclera was left bare. Group B patients underwent pterygium excision with conjunctival autografting. Conjunctival autograft was harvested from superotemporal quadrant of bulbar conjunctiva. The limbal side of the graft was oriented to the limbal side of the defect and the graft was secured with sutured using 10-0 nylon sutures. Both groups had a similar postoperative regimen and were followed up on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> day, 1 month and 3 months.

**RESULTS**

The results of this study are as follows :34 of the 60 patients (56.67%) enrolled in the study belonged to the age group of 40-49. 45 patients out of the 60 were female (75%) while 25% were males. The male to female ratio was 1:3. 43 patients (71.67%) out of 60 did outdoor work.

**Table 1: Characteristics of patients included in the study**

Age (Years)	Number of Patients
20-29	4
30-39	18
40-49	34
50-60	4
Total	60
Gender	Number of patients
Male	15
Female	45
Total	60
Occupation	Number of patients
Outdoor	43
Indoor	17
Total	60
Grade of Pterygium	Number of eyes
Grade 1	13
Grade 2	37
Grade 3	10
Total	60
Type of astigmatism	Number of eyes
With the rule	54
Against the rule	5
Oblique	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

**Table 2: Comparison between Mean Preoperative and Post-operative Uncorrected Visual Acuity in Group A : Pterygium excision with Bare sclera technique with cauterisation**

Grades	Number of eyes	Mean Pre-operative Visual Acuity	Mean Post-operative Visual Acuity	Difference	P value
Grade 1	7	0.66 ± 0.26	0.93 ± 0.19	0.27 ± 0.21	P < 0.01
Grade 2	18	0.52 ± 0.23	0.85 ± 0.20	0.33 ± 0.22	P < 0.01
Grade 3	5	0.36 ± 0.21	0.70 ± 0.18	0.33 ± 0.22	P < 0.01

**Table 3:** Comparison between Mean Preoperative and Post-operative Uncorrected Visual Acuity in Group B : Pterygium excision with Conjunctival Limbal Autografting secured with sutures

Grades	Number of eyes	Mean Pre-operative Visual Acuity	Mean Post-operative Visual Acuity	Difference	P value
Grade 1	6	0.86 ± 0.22	0.94 ± 0.13	0.083 ± 0.20	P > 0.05
Grade 2	19	0.44 ± 0.12	0.85 ± 0.18	0.41 ± 0.15	P < 0.01
Grade 3	5	0.32 ± 0.16	0.73 ± 0.25	0.40 ± 0.08	P < 0.05

**Table 4:** Comparison between change in visual acuity in two groups : Group A (Pterygium excision with Bare sclera technique with cauterisation ) and Group B : (Pterygium excision with Conjunctival Limbal Autografting secured with sutures )

Grades	Change in UCVA in Group A ( mean ± SD)	Change in UCVA in Group B (mean ± SD)	P value
Grade 1	0.26 ± 0.20	0.08 ± 0.20	P > 0.05
Grade 2	0.32 ± 0.21	0.41 ± 0.15	P > 0.05
Grade 3	0.33 ± 0.19	0.40 ± 0.08	P > 0.05

**Table 5:** Axis of Pre-operative Astigmatism in both the groups

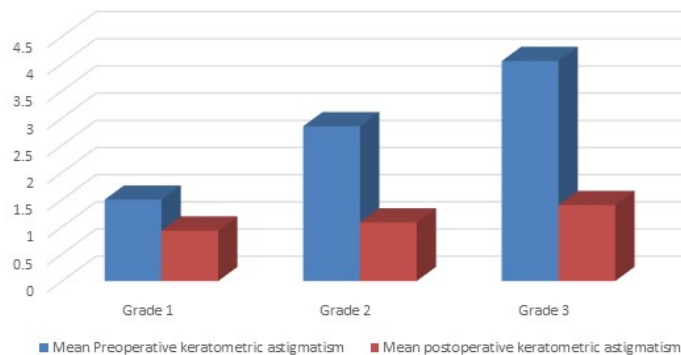
Type	Number of eyes	Percentage
With the rule	54	90
Against the rule	5	8.33
Oblique	1	1.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 6:** Type of astigmatism in both the groups

Type of astigmatism	Number of eyes	Percentage
Simple myopic astigmatism	35	58.33
Simple hypermetropic astigmatism	2	3.33
Compound myopic astigmatism	13	21.67
Compound hypermetropic astigmatism	1	1.67
Mixed astigmatism	9	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 7:** Difference between Pre-operative and Post-Operative Keratometric astigmatism in Group A : Pterygium excision with Bare sclera technique with cauterisation

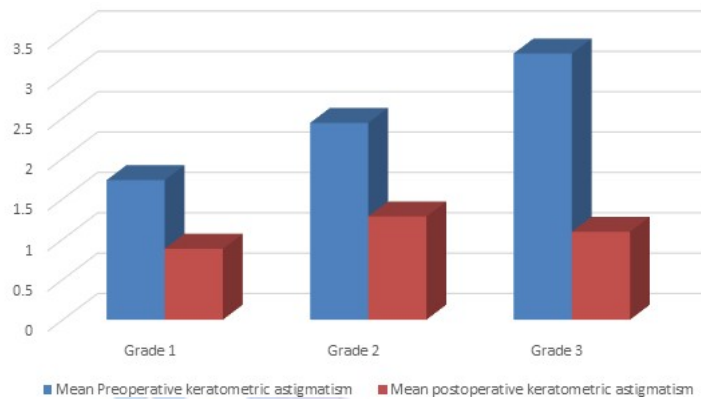
Grade of Pterygium	Number of Patients	Pre-operative mean Keratometric astigmatism	Post-operative mean keratometric astigmatism	Difference	P* value
Grade 1	7	1.54 ± 1.09	0.93 ± 0.35	0.61 ± 1.04	P > 0.05
Grade 2	18	2.85 ± 1.74	1.08 ± 0.57	1.77 ± 1.46	P < 0.01
Grade 3	5	4.05 ± 1.79	1.4 ± 0.63	2.65 ± 1.29	P < 0.01



**Figure 1:** Comparing Keratometric astigmatism in Group A patients

**Table No 8 :** Difference of between Pre-operative and Post-Operative Keratometric astigmatism in Group B Pterygium excision with Conjunctival Limbal Autografting secured with sutures

Grade Pterygium	Number of Patients	Pre-operative mean keratometric astigmatism	Post -operative mean keratometric astigmatism	Difference	P* value
Grade 1	6	1.73 ± 0.54	0.88 ± 0.30	0.85 ± 0.75	P < 0.05
Grade 2	19	2.44 ± 1.37	1.28 ± 0.58	1.16 ± 1.25	P < 0.01
Grade 3	5	3.3 ± 1.51	1.09 ± 0.27	2.21 ± 1.60	P < 0.01



**Figure 2:** Comparing Keratometric astigmatism in Group B patients

**Table no.9 :** Comparison between Mean Keratometric astigmatic change (Reduction) by the two techniques : Group A (Pterygium excision with Bare sclera technique with cauterisation) and Group B (Pterygium excision with Conjunctival Limbal Autografting secured with sutures)

Grade of Pterygium	Change in Keratometric astigmatism in Group A, according to grades	Change in Keratometric astigmatism in Group B, according to grades	P* value
Grade 1	0.61 ± 1.03	0.85 ± 0.75	P > 0.05
Grade 2	1.76 ± 1.45	1.16 ± 1.25	P > 0.05
Grade 3	1.29 ± 1.62	2.21 ± 1.60	P > 0.05

**Table 10:** Recurrence of Pterygium in each group

Group	Number of eyes	Number of eyes with Recurrence	Percentage
Group A Pterygium excision with Bare sclera technique with cauterisation	30	4	13.33
Group B Pterygium excision with Conjunctival Limbal Autografting secured with sutures	30	1	3.33

Z test was applied to compare the incidence of recurrence in each group and it was seen recurrence was higher in Group A (Pterygium excision with Bare sclera technique with cauterisation ) than in Group B (Pterygium excision with Conjunctival Limbal Autografting secured with sutures ) and was highly statistically significant (P < 0.01)

## DISCUSSION

Pterygium causes impairment of vision by inducing corneal astigmatism. A tear meniscus develops between the corneal apex and elevated pterygium, causing apparent flattening of normal corneal curvature. This study was conducted in Department of Ophthalmology of a tertiary care hospital on 60 eyes in an attempt to establish refractive changes following pterygium excision , comparison of

refractive outcome after treatment using two different methods : pterygium excision using bare sclera surgery with cauterisation and pterygium excision with conjunctival limbal autografting secured with sutures, and to compare recurrence following two methods. Females were predominant in our study(75%). Our findings are not similar to other studies in which there is more incidence of pterygium in males than in females as they are involved

more in outdoor work. Our study population consisted of the people coming from low socioeconomic conditions and maximum were females involved in outdoor occupation (especially farming). This may account for the increased number of female pterygium cases in our study. Maximum patients in our study belonged to age group of 40-49 years. Out of total 60 patients, 34 patients i.e. 56.67% people were of age group 40-49 years. These findings in our study agree to that of R.M. Youngson<sup>6</sup>, Zauberman<sup>7</sup>, Dr. Rao S.K. et al.<sup>8</sup>, etc. In our study, it was found that in Group A patients (Patients operated by Pterygium excision with Bare sclera technique with cauterisation) the uncorrected visual acuity improved from  $0.66 \pm 0.26$  to  $0.93 \pm 0.19$  in Grade 1 Pterygium,  $0.52 \pm 0.23$  to  $0.85 \pm 0.20$  in Grade 2 Pterygium and from  $0.36 \pm 0.21$  to  $0.70 \pm 0.18$  in Grade 3 pterygium which was statistically highly significant ( $P < 0.01$ ). Similarly it was found that in Group B patients (Patients treated by Pterygium excision with Conjunctival limbal autografting, secured with sutures) the uncorrected visual acuity improved from  $0.86 \pm 0.22$  to  $0.94 \pm 0.13$  in Grade 1 Pterygium,  $0.44 \pm 0.12$  to  $0.85 \pm 0.18$  in Grade 2 Pterygium and from  $0.32 \pm 0.16$  to  $0.73 \pm 0.25$  in Grade 3 pterygium which was statistically highly significant ( $P < 0.01$ ). Pterygium excision surgery reverses pterygium induced astigmatism is thus improves visual acuity. The observations of our study were comparable with the studies carried out by Maheshwari S<sup>10</sup>, Mohd Yousuf<sup>11</sup>, Dr. Anwar Hussain et al. and Popat B et al.<sup>12</sup> and other similar studies undertaken previously. In our study, when the improvement in the mean uncorrected visual acuity after pterygium excision was compared between the two groups (Group A and Group B), it was found that the difference was not statistically significant ( $P > 0.05$ ); suggesting that improvement in the visual outcome following pterygium excision by these two techniques was similar. In our study, out of 60 patients, 54 patients (90%) had With the Rule Astigmatism, 5 patients (8.33%) had against-the-rule astigmatism and 1 patient (1.67%) had oblique astigmatism preoperatively. The findings in our study are similar to those of other studies like that of Avisar et al.<sup>9</sup>, FA Khan et al., Popat et al.<sup>12</sup> and others. In our study, in Group A (Patients operated by Pterygium excision with Bare sclera technique with cauterisation) preoperative mean keratometric astigmatism was maximum in grade 3 i.e.  $4.05 \pm 1.79$  Diopter and postoperatively it was found to decrease significantly ( $p < 0.001$ ) to  $1.4 \pm 0.63$  Diopter. In grade 2 pterygium, preoperative mean astigmatism reduced from  $2.85 \pm 1.74$  Diopter to  $1.08 \pm 0.57$  Diopter and in grade 1 pterygium, it reduced from  $1.54 \pm 1.09$  Diopter to  $0.93 \pm 0.35$  Diopter which were statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Similarly, in Group B patients (Patients treated by Pterygium excision with Conjunctival limbal autografting, secured

with sutures), the preoperative mean keratometric astigmatism was maximum in grade 3 i.e.  $3.3 \pm 1.51$  Diopter and postoperatively it was found to decrease significantly ( $p < 0.001$ ) to  $1.09 \pm 0.27$  Diopter. In grade 2 pterygium, preoperative astigmatism decreased from  $2.44 \pm 1.37$  Diopter to  $1.28 \pm 0.58$  Diopter and in grade 1 pterygium, from  $1.73 \pm 0.54$  Diopter to  $0.88 \pm 0.30$  Diopter postoperatively which was statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The above findings of our study, correlating the size of pterygium and the amount of induced astigmatism are comparable to that in literature and similar studies undertaken by Maheshwari et al., Kampitak<sup>13</sup>, Mohd. Salih, Chourasia P, FA Khan Et al. Popat et al. and others. In our study, when the mean difference in the decrease in astigmatism according to respective grades were compared between the two groups Group A and Group B, the difference was not found to be statistically significant ( $P > 0.05$ ). It means that the reduction in corneal astigmatism after pterygium excision by the two surgical techniques were similar. Popat et al. found that reduction in astigmatism was more in patients operated for Pterygium excision with conjunctival limbal autografting, whereas Yilmaz et al.<sup>14</sup> found that reduction of astigmatism was more in patients operated with bare sclera technique. In our study, recurrence of pterygium in patients operated with bare sclera technique was 13.33% (in 4 eyes out of 30) which was significantly more ( $P < 0.01$ ) than patients operated with a conjunctival autografting secured with sutures was 3.33% (in 1 eye out of 30). The findings of our study correlate with findings in the studies of Cameron, RM Youngson, Maheshwari et al. and others which conclude that conjunctival limbal autografting results in decreased incidence of recurrent pterygium as compared to pterygium excision with bare sclera technique.

## CONCLUSION

Pterygium leads to significant astigmatism which affects the vision of the patient. In our study, pterygium excision itself significantly reduces astigmatism and improves the visual acuity. But the type of surgery performed does not seem to have effect on improvement in the visual acuity and the amount of decrease in postoperative astigmatism. From our study, it is observed that Pterygium excision with conjunctival limbal autografting has a lower recurrence rate as compared to that of bare sclera technique and hence pterygium excision with conjunctival autografting is the most preferred technique.

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Source of Support: None Declared  
Conflict of Interest: None Declared

