

Clinical assessment of facial scarring – using current literature and research to inform tool choice

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Introduction

The psychological, functional and cosmetic effect of facial scarring has a marked impact on everyday life for those with facial burns. Most scar assessments do not consider the face specifically, and have been tested on other or all body areas. Early identification and tracking of physical scar characteristics in people with facial scarring is an integral part of clinical decision-making. This paper aims to combine current literature and expert knowledge regarding scar assessment to inform clinical choice of facial scar assessments.

Method

Current literature including systematic reviews in scar assessment were reviewed to identify facial scar assessments suitable for measuring physical scar characteristics. Relevant assessments were then appraised for clinical utility and psychometric soundness based on research and use in clinical practice by the authors.

Results

Current literature and recent systematic reviews in scar assessment identified a paucity of relevant measures to assess physical characteristics of facial scarring. Measures that have clinical application in assessment of the physical characteristics of facial scarring including: Mimic Movements to assess range and joint mobility; the Modified Inventory of Potential Reconstructive Needs; and the Patient and Observer Scar Assessment Scale.

Discussion

This paper will present the clinical utility of relevant assessments for measuring the physical characteristics of facial scarring based on literature and the use of these measures in practice. The clinical assessment of simple and complex facial scarring will be demonstrated, for prevention and treatment planning purposes.

Conclusion

This paper will assist burn clinicians to apply systematic reviews and research to inform their choice of clinical assessments for facial scarring.

Key Words

Facial scar, assessment, outcome measurement, hypertrophic scarring.

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