

Clinical Assessment Score for Monitoring Free Flaps in the Dark Skin

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Abstract

Background: To determine the value of a clinical assessment score in the monitoring of microsurgical free flaps in the dark skinned African patients.

Aims: We devised a simple assessment score incorporating colour, skin temperature, turgor, Doppler pulsation and pin prick response into a single numerical score as an index of adequacy of perfusion for 21 consecutive free flaps at our centre. Each of the parameters score ranges from 0 to 2. A Total score less than 4 indicate a healthy flap while a score above 4 points to possible flap compromise.

Results: A 100% sensitivity rate with no false negatives, with a 14.2 % take back rate was found in this study. While several institutional issues still hamper free flap salvage in this low resource centre.

Conclusion: It appears this may be an objective reliable non invasive assessment method of monitoring free flaps in the dark skinned patients.