Functional results and complications of Mersilene mesh use for frontalis suspension ptosis surgery

P Mehta, P Patel, J M Olver

Aims: To assess the functional results and complications of Mersilene (polyester) mesh frontalis sling suspension to correct poor levator function ptosis.

Methods: Retrospective case series. 32 eyelids of 20 patients (12 children and eight adults).

Results: Follow up 1–69 months (mean 32). Children: eight patients had bilateral and four unilateral surgery (20 eyelids). Good long term functional results were achieved in 73% (8/11 children) and 77% (14/18) eyelids. Two children had early postoperative wound infection requiring removal of mesh in one; the other was lost to follow up following medical treatment. Adults: four patients had bilateral and four unilateral surgery (12 eyelids). Good long term functional results were achieved in 75% (6/8 patients, 9/12 eyelids). One postoperative wound infection and one mesh exposure were treated definitively by surgical excision of mesh.

Conclusion: Mersilene mesh provides good functional results but up to 20% of patients have early soft tissue complications. Other materials such as monofilament suture or autogenous fascia lata should be considered.

Long term functional results (table 1)
All eyelids had improvement in the lid height with a good deep skin crease. Height was maintained at 2 years in 73% (8/11) of children and 75% (6/8) of adults. This represented good long term functional results in 77% (14/18) of eyelids in children and 75% (9/12) of eyelids in adults. Two children with unilateral ptosis had a poor functional result from not using their frontalis muscle and one a poor skin crease. There were no overcorrections.

Two of 20 patients (four of 32 eyelids, 12.5%) required further surgery for recurrent ptosis following Mersilene excision (cases 2 and 3).

Soft tissue complications
Four patients (two bilateral and two unilateral surgery) developed soft tissue complications 1–4 weeks after surgery.

Case 1
This was a 4 year old girl with bilateral congenital dystrophic ptosis. Two weeks after surgery a small raised red lesion was seen on the medial aspect of the left brow, a presumed
Mersilene mesh when used for frontalis suspension (76%)

This case series confirms the good long term results of eyelid height was adequately maintained without further stab incision area and underlying mesh. Postoperative his brow incision site (fig 1B). He underwent excision of the forehead and eyelid abscesses were excised along with a lump at the site of the eyelid and brow stab incisions. He did not reattend until 3 weeks after surgery by which time he had micro abscesses (fig 1A). Following systemic antibiotics he was given a further course of systemic antibiotics but it failed to settle and the mesh was excised in 6 year old boy (case 2). (B) Forehead Mersilene mesh exposure in a 23 year old man with congenital third nerve palsy (case 4).

DISCUSSION

This case series confirms the good long term results of Mersilene mesh when used for frontalis suspension (76% eyelids), but it was not as good as AFL (92%). Soft tissue complications such as extrusion, granuloma, and infection unfortunately do occur. Surgeons should be aware of the risks of this material, especially as removal of the mesh may result in gradual recurrence of the ptosis. Extrusion of Mersilene mesh used as an upper eyelid spacer has also been reported in 20% cases. AFL is considered the best frontalis suspensory material, as it is not degraded and is believed to allow fibrovascular tissue ingrowth leading to biointegration without significant inflammation. AFL has good long term functional results with maintenance of lid height and well formed skin crease. There are only occasional reports of postoperative wound infection. Stored fascia lata has a higher rate of late ptosis recurrence. There is a wide choice of non-autogenous materials for frontalis suspension (table 2).

Monofilament synthetic materials—for example, Prolene and silicone rod, are not incorporated into tissues and their functional results are often less satisfactory than autogenous fascia lata, with ptosis recurrence and loss of skin crease, but they have low rates of infection and exposure/extrusion and are easily removed if the eyelid is too high.

Mersilene mesh has been promoted as an alternative to autogenous fascia lata because it acts as a scaffold for fibrovascular ingrowth and becomes integrated with tissue. Initial results with Mersilene mesh were very encouraging. It avoids the need for a second surgical site and has a good long term effect. Reported complications of Mersilene and of Gore-Tex frontalis suspension include extrusion, granuloma and infection (table 3).

Surprisingly, El-Toukhy had no complications in 46 eyelids. This may be attributed to their surgical modification where instead of eyelid stab incisions, there is a full eyelid crease incision and the Mersilene is sutured to the anterior surface of the tarsus. Meticulous wound closure with well buried mesh should reduce complications. Low grade infection may occur along the mesh from either the eyelid or forehead incisions.

### Table 1  Results of frontalis suspension surgery using Mersilene mesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complications</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lagophthalmos—initial marked</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary corneal exposure</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infection/granuloma</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure of mesh</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

CPEO = chronic progressive external ophthalmoplegia; MRD = upper margin reflex distance.
particularly if there is fibre exposure. Suturing the eyelid stab incisions with 8/0 Vicryl did not prevent infection in 2/20 (10%) patients in this study. Our overall soft tissue complication rate was 20%, higher than in other reported studies (table 3). Complications occurred within a month of surgery, suggesting foreign body reaction,12 or infective aetiology despite postoperative antimicrobial prophylaxis. It was felt that a piece of overly wide mesh had contributed to the mesh exposure in case 4.

Removal of the mesh may result in ptosis, especially as a long length of mesh is dissected out both from the eyelid and between the eyelid and brow.31

There is a trade-off between complications and effectiveness for non-autogenous frontalis suspension materials. Prolene suture and silicone rod have low infection and extrusion rates but their functional effect may diminish with time. Mersilene mesh and Gore-Tex suture have more soft tissue complications but a good long term functional effect. Only Autogenous fascia lata has both low morbidity and is long term effectiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, year</th>
<th>Material used</th>
<th>No of patients</th>
<th>No of eyelids</th>
<th>Mean follow up (months)</th>
<th>Complications (infection/extrusion/granuloma)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carter, 1997a</td>
<td>Silicone rod</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Extrusion, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldberger, 1991b</td>
<td>Silicone rod</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Recurrence, Exposure keratopathy, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leone et al, 1981c</td>
<td>Silicone rod</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Skin bulging over silicone rods, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasserman, 2001d</td>
<td>Monofilament nylon</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Recurrence, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasserman, 2001d</td>
<td>Polypropylene</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>Recurrence, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasserman, 2001d</td>
<td>ePTFE (Gore-Tex)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Recurrence, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasserman, 2001d</td>
<td>ePTFE</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Infection/granuloma, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasserman, 2001d</td>
<td>Stored fascia lata</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Rejection, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasserman, 2001d</td>
<td>Banked, donor, irradiated fascia lata</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Recurrence, 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Esmaili, 1998d</td>
<td>Banked, donor, irradiated fascia lata</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Infection to donor fascia lata, 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mauriella, 1998d</td>
<td>Cadaveric fascia lata</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2** Complications of frontalis suspension surgery with non-autogenous materials and autogenous fascia lata

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, year</th>
<th>Material used</th>
<th>No of patients</th>
<th>No of eyelids</th>
<th>Mean follow up (months)</th>
<th>Complications (infection/extrusion/granuloma)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kemp, 2001d</td>
<td>Fasila</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Late extrusion, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El-Toukhy, 2001d</td>
<td>Fasila</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasser, 2001d</td>
<td>Fasila</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Recurrence, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mufu, 1999d</td>
<td>Fasila</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Infection, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yalaz, 1997d</td>
<td>Fasila</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Granuloma, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabrieli, 1996d</td>
<td>Fasila</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>None recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can, 1969d</td>
<td>Fasila</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Extrinsic, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hintschich, 1995d</td>
<td>Fasila</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>20 (median)</td>
<td>Infection, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder, 1993d</td>
<td>Fasila</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>Localised discharge, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downes, 1990d</td>
<td>Fasila</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Migrated, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downes, 1989d</td>
<td>Fasila</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10 weeks</td>
<td>Preseptal cellulites, 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3** Complications of frontalis suspension surgery with Mersilene mesh

ePTFE = expanded polytetrafluoroethylene (Gore-Tex).
References

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