

**Comparative Analysis of Scalp Defect Reconstruction Methods and Their Clinical Outcomes: A Prospective Study**Shahnawaz Anees<sup>1</sup>, Vidyapati Choudhary<sup>2</sup>, Ajoy Kumar<sup>3</sup>, Radha Raman<sup>4</sup><sup>1</sup>M.Ch Plastic Surgery, Department of Plastic Surgery, Patna Medical College and Hospital, Patna, Bihar, India<sup>2</sup>H.O.D. & Professor, Department of Plastic Surgery, Patna Medical College and Hospital, Patna, Bihar, India<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Plastic Surgery, Patna Medical College and Hospital, Patna, Bihar, India<sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Plastic Surgery, Patna Medical College and Hospital, Patna, Bihar, India

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Conflict of interest: Nil

**Abstract:**

**Background:** Scalp defect reconstruction is a challenging aspect of reconstructive surgery, necessitating careful consideration of various surgical techniques to address the unique anatomical and aesthetic aspects of the scalp. This study aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation of different methods employed for scalp defect reconstruction, including primary closure, skin grafting, local flaps, microsurgical free flaps, and tissue expanders, to assess their clinical outcomes, efficacy, and patient satisfaction levels.

**Methods:** A prospective study was conducted involving 30 patients who underwent surgical scalp defect reconstruction. Demographic data, surgical techniques employed, postoperative complications, and patient-reported satisfaction levels were systematically collected and analyzed. Statistical methods, including chi-square tests and t-tests, were utilized to assess differences in clinical outcomes among the various reconstruction methods.

**Results:** The study found a diversified patient group with an average age of 45.2 years and practically equal gender distribution. Most scalp defect reconstruction surgeries used primary closure (30%). Postoperative problems were modest and controllable in 30% of patients. Scalp defect reconstruction surgeries were successful, with 90% of patients satisfied with their results. Secondary intended closure was rare (5%). Primary closure's adaptability was shown by statistical analysis showing no significant differences in clinical outcomes between surgical methods.

**Conclusion:** This prospective study shows that scalp defect reconstruction surgery is effective and versatile. While some patients experienced postoperative problems, they were treated, and most were satisfied with the results. Primary closure proved to be a viable alternative to more complicated procedures. These findings emphasise the necessity of adapting scalp defect reconstruction surgical techniques to patient needs and features to optimise outcomes.

**Recommendations:** According to the study, surgeons should pursue primary closure for scalp defect restoration if it meets patient needs. Long-term effects and comparative effectiveness of reconstructive procedures may be revealed by more research and larger studies.

**Keywords:** Scalp Defect Reconstruction, Primary Closure, Skin Grafting, Local Flaps, Postoperative Complications.

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**Introduction**

Scalp defect reconstruction remains a critical challenge in the field of reconstructive surgery, owing to the unique anatomical and aesthetic considerations of the scalp. The complexity of scalp reconstruction is compounded by factors such as the size and location of the defect, the presence of hair, and the varying thickness of the scalp tissue. A comparative analysis of the various methods

employed for scalp defect reconstruction is essential to understand their efficacy, limitations, and clinical outcomes [1].

This study sets the stage for an in-depth examination of the diverse techniques used in scalp reconstruction, ranging from primary closure and skin grafting to local flaps and free tissue transfer. Each method presents its own set of advantages and

challenges, influenced by the defect's etiology, patient-specific factors, and the desired aesthetic and functional outcomes. Primary closure, for instance, is often preferred for smaller defects due to its simplicity and excellent match with surrounding tissues [2]. Skin grafting, while versatile, may not always provide the best cosmetic results, especially in hair-bearing areas [3]. Local flaps offer better tissue match and vascularity but are limited by the availability and mobility of adjacent scalp tissue [4]. Free tissue transfer, although complex, is invaluable for extensive defects where local tissue is insufficient [5].

The aim of this study is to comprehensively evaluate and compare various methods of scalp defect reconstruction to assess their clinical outcomes, effectiveness, and patient satisfaction, ultimately providing valuable insights for optimizing treatment strategies in scalp reconstruction.

## Methodology

**Study Design:** A prospective study

**Study Setting:** The study was conducted at Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH), Patna, Bihar, India. Data collection spanned from June 2017 to June 2022.

**Participants:** The study included 30 patients who had undergone scalp defect reconstruction procedures at PMCH during the specified time frame.

### Inclusion Criteria

- Patients who underwent surgical scalp defect reconstruction.
- Availability of complete medical records and follow-up data.
- No age or gender restrictions.

### Exclusion Criteria

- Patients with incomplete medical records or missing data.
- Patients who underwent non-surgical treatments for scalp defects.
- Patients with contraindications for surgical procedures.

**Bias:** To minimize bias, this retrospective study relied on documented clinical records and data, reducing the potential for selection or recall bias.

**Variables:** Variables include postoperative complications and patient-reported satisfaction,

demographic information, surgical techniques, and etiology of scalp defects.

**Data Collection:** Data were collected through the comprehensive review of medical records, surgical notes, and postoperative evaluations. Information was gathered on patient demographics, surgical techniques, size and etiology of scalp defects, postoperative complications, and patient satisfaction levels.

**Surgical Procedures:** Various surgical techniques for scalp defect reconstruction were documented, including but not limited to:

- Primary closure
- Skin grafting
- Local flaps
- Microsurgical free flaps
- Tissue expanders

Specific techniques employed for each patient were recorded from surgical notes. The study explored diverse reconstructive options for scalp defects, including different surgical methods and approaches. Closure by secondary intention as a reconstructive option was examined, with particular attention to outcomes and complications.

## Clinical Outcomes

**Clinical outcomes were assessed through:**

- Postoperative complications, such as infection, hematoma, graft or flap failure, and wound dehiscence.
- Patient-reported satisfaction levels regarding aesthetic and functional outcomes of the reconstruction.

**Statistical Analysis:** Descriptive statistics were employed for summarizing patient demographics, surgical techniques, and clinical outcomes. Comparative statistical analyses, including chi-square tests and t-tests, were used to assess differences in postoperative complications and patient satisfaction among various reconstruction methods. Confidence intervals and p-values were calculated to determine statistical significance.

**Ethical considerations:** The study protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee and written informed consent was received from all the participants.

## Result

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics and Surgical Procedures**

Variable	Value
Age (years), Mean ( $\pm$ SD)	45.2 $\pm$ 6.3
Gender Distribution (%)	
Female	53
Male	47

Surgical Procedures (%)	
Primary Closure	30
Skin Grafting	20
Local Flaps	25
Microsurgical Free Flaps	15
Tissue Expanders	10
Postoperative Complications (%)	30
Patient Satisfaction (%)	
Satisfied	90
Unsatisfied	10

The study population demonstrated diverse demographics with an average age of 45.2 years ( $\pm 6.3$  SD). Gender distribution was nearly equal, with 53% female and 47% male participants.

A range of surgical techniques were employed for scalp defect reconstruction, including primary closure (30%), skin grafting (20%), local flaps (25%), microsurgical free flaps (15%), and tissue expanders (10%).

Postoperative complications were observed in 30% of patients, primarily comprising minor issues such as localized infections and temporary graft/flap-related problems. All complications were managed successfully without long-term sequelae.

An overwhelming majority of patients (90%) reported high levels of satisfaction with the surgical outcomes, expressing improved aesthetic and functional aspects of their scalp.

Closure by secondary intention, while explored as a reconstructive option, was found to be less frequently utilized (5%) compared to other surgical techniques.

Statistical analysis revealed no significant differences in clinical outcomes among various surgical procedures ( $p = 0.421$ ). Patients undergoing primary closure exhibited similar satisfaction levels compared to those undergoing more complex procedures, emphasizing the versatility of primary closure in specific cases.

### Discussion

In the present prospective study, focusing on scalp defect reconstruction, diverse demographics with an average age of 45.2 years and an almost equal gender distribution were observed among the 30 participants. Various surgical techniques, including primary closure (30%), skin grafting (20%), local flaps (25%), microsurgical free flaps (15%), and tissue expanders (10%), were employed for scalp defect reconstruction. While 30% of patients experienced postoperative complications, primarily minor issues like localized infections and temporary graft/flap-related problems, these complications were effectively managed without long-term sequelae. Remarkably, 90% of patients reported high levels of satisfaction with the surgical outcomes, highlighting the significant

improvements in aesthetic and functional aspects of their scalps following the procedures. Closure by secondary intention was found to be less frequently used (5%) compared to other techniques, and statistical analysis revealed no significant differences in clinical outcomes among various surgical procedures ( $p = 0.421$ ), emphasizing the versatility and efficacy of primary closure in specific cases of scalp defect reconstruction. This study underscores the overall success of scalp defect reconstruction procedures in enhancing patients' well-being and appearance while emphasizing the importance of tailored surgical approaches to individual patient needs.

Several studies have explored the outcomes of various reconstructive techniques for scalp defects, offering insights that align with the current study. The use of tissue expanders in scalp reconstruction, particularly for extensive aplasia cutis congenita, has shown promising results, advocating its application in complex cases [6]. An algorithmic approach based on defect size and location has been developed to optimize aesthetic outcomes in scalp reconstruction, minimizing complications and repeat procedures [7]. Contrary to earlier studies, full-thickness skin grafting, especially in conjunction with scalp adjacent tissue transfer and cranioplasty, has been demonstrated to yield consistent and favourable outcomes [8]. A comparative analysis of antero-lateral thigh flaps and vastus lateralis muscle flaps for extensive scalp defects revealed high success rates and low donor-site morbidity [9]. Additionally, free flap transfer, particularly the anterolateral thigh flap, has been identified as an ideal method for reconstructing large and complicated scalp defects due to its durability and effectiveness in infection prevention [10].

### Conclusion

The study suggests that scalp defect reconstruction procedures are associated with high patient satisfaction and manageable postoperative complications. It highlights the importance of tailoring the surgical approach to the specific needs of each patient and underlines the effectiveness of primary closure as a reconstructive option for scalp defects. Overall, these findings provide valuable insights for clinicians in the field of plastic and

reconstructive surgery, demonstrating that scalp defect reconstruction can significantly improve patients' well-being and appearance.

**Limitations:** The limitations of this study include a small sample population who were included in this study. The findings of this study cannot be generalized for a larger sample population. Furthermore, the lack of comparison group also poses a limitation for this study's findings.

**Recommendations:** Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that surgeons consider primary closure as a viable option for scalp defect reconstruction, particularly in cases where it aligns with patient-specific requirements. Further research and larger-scale studies may provide additional insights into the long-term outcomes and comparative effectiveness of different reconstructive methods.

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