e-ISSN: 0975-1556, p-ISSN:2820-2643
Available online on www.ijpcr.com
International Journal of Pharmaceutical and Clinical Research 2024; 16(5); 1778-1781

Original Research Article

Efficacy of Combined Intravitreal Bevacizumab and Triamcinolone for Branch Retinal Vein Occlusion

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Received: 10-04-2024 / Revised: 23-04-2024 / Accepted: 09-05-2024
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Conflict of interest: Nil

Abstract:
This randomized controlled trial evaluates the efficacy of combined intravitreal bevacizumab and triamcinolone compared to bevacizumab alone in treating macular edema due to branch retinal vein occlusion (BRVO). Conducted over three years at Nalanda Medical College and Hospital, Patna, the study involved 120 patients. Results indicate that the combination therapy significantly reduced central macular thickness and improved best-corrected visual acuity with a lower recurrence rate of macular edema. Adverse events were minimal, supporting the combined treatment's safety profile. These findings suggest that combined intravitreal injections could enhance treatment protocols for BRVO-related macular edema.
Keywords: Branch Retinal Vein Occlusion, Combined Intravitreal Therapy, Macular Edema, Bevacizumab, Triamcinolone

Introduction

Branch retinal vein occlusion (BRVO) is one of the most common vascular disorders of the retina, second only to diabetic retinopathy in prevalence [1]. It typically results from the obstruction of the retinal venous system, which leads to vascular leakage, macular edema, and consequential vision loss. The management of BRVO focuses on alleviating these sequelae to preserve or improve visual acuity [2,3].

Recent advancements in treatment options have significantly impacted the therapeutic landscape of BRVO. Among these, the use of intravitreal injections of anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (anti-VEGF) agents and corticosteroids has become a cornerstone in the management of macular edema secondary to BRVO [4,5]. Bevacizumab, an anti-VEGF agent, and triamcinolone, a corticosteroid, are two drugs commonly employed either alone or in combination to reduce macular edema and improve visual outcomes [6,7].

This paper explores the efficacy of a combined therapy approach using intravitreal bevacizumab and triamcinolone in the treatment of BRVO. The rationale behind combining these agents lies in their complementary mechanisms of action. Bevacizumab inhibits VEGF, thereby reducing vascular permeability and new vessel formation, while triamcinolone addresses the inflammatory components of vascular leakage. By integrating the anti-inflammatory and anti-permeability effects of these drugs, the combined treatment may offer a synergistic benefit, potentially leading to improved anatomical and functional outcomes in patients suffering from BRVO.

Methodology

Study Design: This study is a prospective, randomized controlled trial designed to assess the efficacy of combined intravitreal injections of bevacizumab and triamcinolone in patients diagnosed with branch retinal vein occlusion (BRVO).

Duration: The research is conducted over three years, from January 2021 to December 2023.

Setting: The study is based at the Nalanda Medical College and Hospital (NMCH) in Patna, which provides a diverse patient demographic and adequate facilities for the treatment and follow-up of BRVO patients.

Participants: Participants are eligible for inclusion if they:

- Are diagnosed with BRVO based on clinical examination and fluorescein angiography.

- Have macular edema confirmed by optical coherence tomography (OCT).

- Are aged 18 years or older.

Exclusion criteria include:

- Previous treatment with anti-VEGF or corticosteroids for BRVO.

- Any other ocular condition that could affect visual acuity (e.g., glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy).

- Pregnancy or lactation.

Sample Size: The sample size is determined based on previous studies indicating the effect size of combined intravitreal therapy on macular edema. Assuming a power of 80% and a significance level of 5%, a total of 120 patients will be enrolled, with 60 patients in the treatment group and 60 in the control group.

Randomization and Blinding

Participants are randomly assigned to one of two groups:

1. Treatment group: Receives combined intravitreal injections of bevacizumab (1.25 mg/0.05 mL) and triamcinolone (2 mg/0.05 mL).

2. Control group: Receives intravitreal injections of bevacizumab alone (1.25 mg/0.05 mL).

Intervention: Intravitreal injections are administered at the baseline visit, followed by additional injections at 1 month and 3 months. Further injections are guided by the disease activity as evaluated by OCT and visual acuity testing.

Outcome Measures

Primary outcomes include:

- Improvement in central macular thickness as measured by OCT.

- Improvement in best-corrected visual acuity (BCVA).

Secondary outcomes involve:

- Recurrence rate of macular edema.

- Adverse events related to the treatment.

Statistical Analysis: Data will be analyzed using SPSS software. Continuous variables will be expressed as means and standard deviations, and categorical variables as frequencies and percentages. Comparisons between groups will be made using the student's t-test for continuous variables and the Chi-square test for categorical variables. A p-value of less than 0.05 will be considered statistically significant.

Results

A total of 120 patients were enrolled in the study, with 60 in the treatment group receiving combined intravitreal injections of bevacizumab and triamcinolone, and 60 in the control group receiving only bevacizumab. The baseline characteristics were similar between the two groups, with no significant differences in age, sex, duration of BRVO, or initial central macular thickness (CMT).

Efficacy Outcomes

Central Macular Thickness:

- At 6 months, the mean reduction in CMT was significantly greater in the treatment group (210 μm) compared to the control group (150 μm), with a p-value of 0.01.

- At 12 months, the treatment group maintained a greater reduction in CMT (198 μm) compared to the control group (138 μm), with a p-value of 0.02.

Best-Corrected Visual Acuity (BCVA):

- There was a statistically significant improvement in BCVA in the treatment group. The average improvement at 6 months was 0.4 logMAR in the treatment group compared to 0.2 logMAR in the control group, with a p-value of 0.005.

- This trend continued at 12 months, with the treatment group showing an average improvement of 0.38 logMAR compared to 0.22 logMAR in the control group, with a p-value of 0.01.

Recurrence Rate: The recurrence of macular edema was observed in 10% of patients in the treatment group compared to 28% in the control group by the end of the study period, indicating a significant reduction in recurrence with combined therapy (p-value = 0.03).

Adverse Events: Adverse events were similar between the groups, with the most common being transient intraocular pressure increase, reported in 5% of the treatment group and 3% of the control group. There were no cases of endophthalmitis, retinal detachment, or significant intraocular pressure issues that required surgical intervention.

Parameter	Treatment Group	Control Group	p-value
Sample Size	60	60	N/A
Reduction in CMT at 6 months	210 µm	150 µm	0.01
Reduction in CMT at 12 months	198 µm	138 µm	0.02
Improvement in BCVA at 6 months	0.4 logMAR	0.2 logMAR	0.005
Improvement in BCVA at 12 months	0.38 logMAR	0.22 logMAR	0.01
Recurrence Rate of Macular Edema	10%	28%	0.03
Adverse Events (Intraocular Pressure Increase)	5%	3%	Not significant

Abbreviations:

- CMT: Central Macular Thickness
- BCVA: Best-Corrected Visual Acuity
- µm: Micrometers
- logMAR: Logarithm of the Minimum Angle of Resolution

This table summarizes the key outcomes and statistical significances observed in the study.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that the combined intravitreal administration of bevacizumab and triamcinolone offers a superior therapeutic outcome in the management of macular edema due to branch retinal vein occlusion (BRVO) compared to bevacizumab alone [9,10]. The significant reduction in central macular thickness (CMT) observed in the treatment group at both 6 and 12 months, along with the corresponding improvement in best-corrected visual acuity (BCVA), underscores the synergistic effect of these medications [11,12]. The combined approach not only addresses the VEGF-mediated permeability that contributes to macular edema but also mitigates the inflammatory pathways that are likely involved in BRVO pathogenesis [14,15].

The lower recurrence rate of macular edema in the treatment group points to a sustained efficacy of the combination therapy, which could translate into fewer treatments over time and better long-term visual outcomes for patients [16]. This could be particularly advantageous in clinical practice, reducing the frequency of injections and thereby decreasing the treatment burden and potential complications associated with repeated intravitreal procedures. Adverse events were minimal and comparable between the groups, indicating that the addition of triamcinolone does not significantly increase the risk profile of the treatment [17]. This is particularly relevant given the concerns about potential steroid-related complications, such as increased intraocular pressure and cataract formation. However, the relatively low incidence of increased intraocular pressure and the absence of serious adverse events in our study suggest that with careful patient selection and monitoring, the benefits of combined therapy might outweigh the risks [19].

Overall, the results of this study advocate for a reevaluation of standard treatment protocols for BRVO-associated macular edema, potentially incorporating combined bevacizumab and triamcinolone therapy as a more efficacious initial treatment strategy. Further research, particularly long-term studies, is necessary to validate these findings and optimize treatment regimens for broader application in clinical practice [20].

Conclusion

The study conclusively demonstrates that the combination of intravitreal bevacizumab and triamcinolone is more effective than bevacizumab alone in treating macular edema secondary to branch retinal vein occlusion (BRVO). This combination therapy not only led to significant reductions in central macular thickness and improvements in best-corrected visual acuity but also resulted in a lower recurrence rate of macular edema. The adverse events associated with the treatment were minimal and manageable, suggesting that the added benefits of triamcinolone

do not substantially increase the risk profile. These findings propose that combined intravitreal therapy should be considered a viable and superior initial treatment strategy for BRVO-related macular edema, potentially setting a new standard for clinical practice pending further long-term studies.

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