Platelet-rich plasma therapy a safe option for cartilage damage, new study finds

July 14 2012

When it comes to treating cartilage tears in athletes, Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) therapy is a safe and effective method of treatment, according to research presented today at the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine's (AOSSM) Annual Meeting in Baltimore.

"Using PRP therapy to repair cartilage is still relatively experimental, but studies like this show it's not only safe but also offers a significant improvement in function and quality of life for patients," said Elizaveta Kon, MD, lead author for the study and Director of Nano-Biotecnology Laboratory at the Rizzoli Orthopaedic Institute in Bologna, Italy. "None of the patients treated experienced complications like infection, deep vein thrombosis or fever."

During the study, 180 patients were treated for chronic pain or swelling of the knee with either PRP therapy or viscosupplementation, a more common hyaluronic acid-based treatment for cartilage damage. A total of 109 patients, with an average age of 56, reached a final evaluation. Both treatment groups demonstrated significant improvement based on higher post-treatment IKDC scores, which measure pain and basic function in follow-up interviews.

"As athletic participation has grown," Kon noted, "new problems like cartilage lesions, or tears, continue to emerge. Finding the right approach to treatment is difficult, but PRP has emerged as a viable option according to our research."

Kon also noted that long-term follow-ups for PRP treatments are needed to further evaluate the overall effectiveness of the therapy for future patients.

Provided by American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine