

A THUMBS UP: A SUCCESSFUL PRIMARY FULL THICKNESS SKIN GRAFT OVER THE THUMB FOLLOWING TRAUMATIC HAND INJURY DONE IN A NON-TERTIARY CENTRE AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Introduction: Traumatic hand injuries are often associated with skin defects over the hands and fingers. Full thickness skin grafting (FTSG) provides good option of immediate wound closure to minimise risk of infection and to gain early return of hand function. We present a case of a 40-year-old non local gentleman with right hand dominant who presented with an alleged industrial injury over the right hand. Local examination over the right hand showed around 7cm degloving wound over the palmar aspect of the hand extending from the thumb to wrist. There was full thickness skin loss over the pulp of the thumb with exposed flexor pollicis longus tendon. With all patient and hospital related factors considered, we decided to proceed with wound debridement and exploration over the right hand and primary FTSG over the right thumb immediately 12 hours post injury.

Discussion: Primary thumb FTSG was harvested from the patient's right radial forearm free flap. Graft showed good uptake after day 5. Without need of advanced dressing the wound healed completely after 8 weeks. We obtained a modified Vancouver Scar Scale score of 3. Patient gained full range of motion over the right thumb however had mild hypersensitivity. Patient was able to return to work with normal hand function as in pre-morbid condition.

Conclusion: The degree of soft tissue injury, amount of contamination and the length of time between the initial trauma and definitive care in a hospital setting must be considered prior to decision for primary FTSG to ensure the best functional result especially amidst Covid-19 pandemic whereby the expertise of microvascular or plastic surgery is not feasible.