



ASSESSING BURN PATIENTS' SCARS PERSPECTIVE THROUGH THE PATIENT AND OBSERVER SCAR ASSESSMENT SCALE (POSAS 2.0)

Gómez, Lizbey Andrea - Health Outcomes Manager

INTRODUCTION

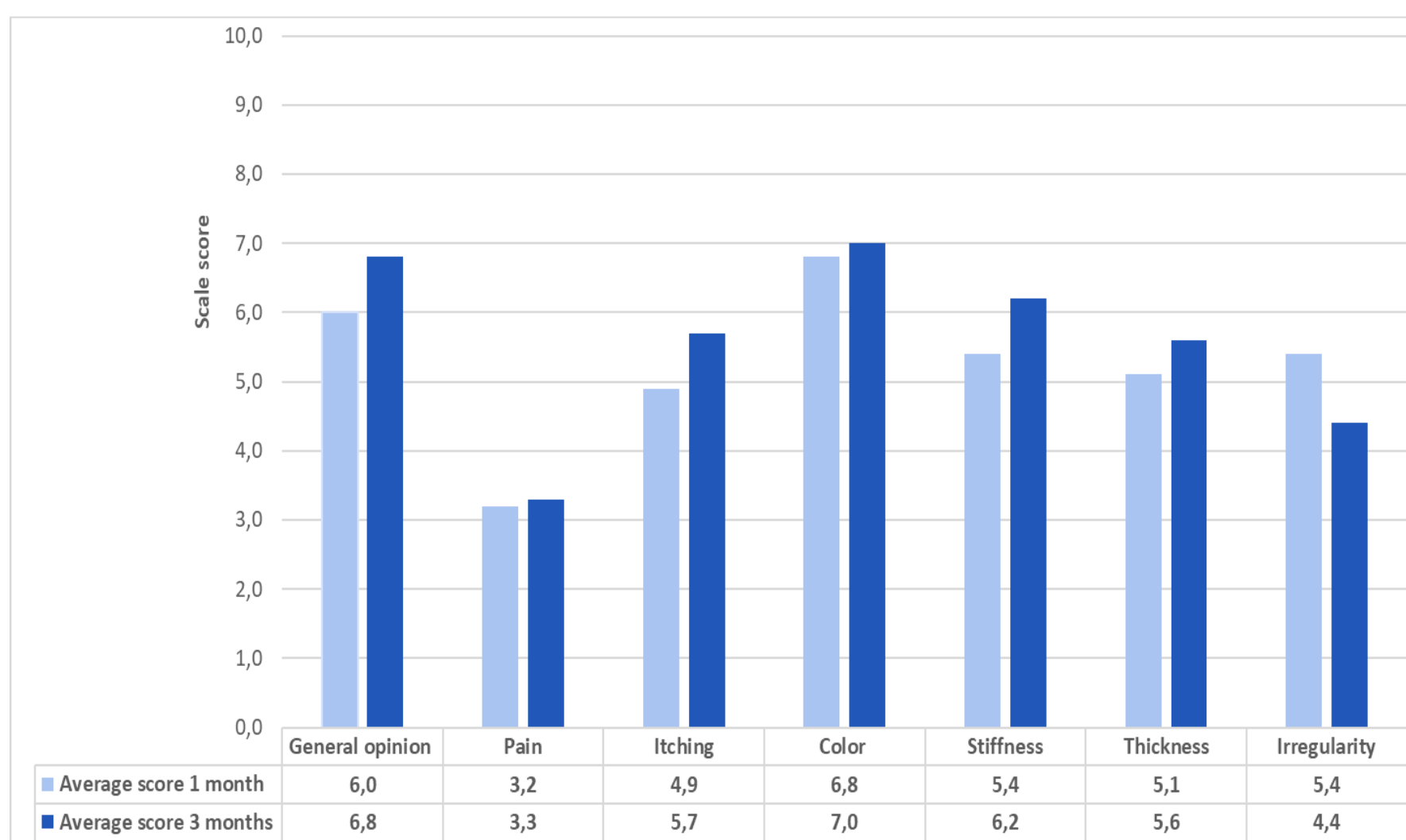
Burn scars may profoundly impact individuals' quality of life due to the variety of functional, cosmetic, and psychological challenges. International literature supports employing the Patient and Observer Scar Assessment Scale (POSAS 2.0), which comprises clinician and patient self-assessment versions in the measurement of scar quality. Results of POSAS 2.0 scale among burn patients treated at the burn unit of Fundación Santa Fe de Bogotá are described, focusing on assessments conducted at 1-month and 3-months post-discharge. This study particularly highlights the comparison between the perspectives of clinicians and patients.

METHODS

Burn patients discharged from Fundación Santa Fe de Bogotá between November 2021 and December 2023 were followed up using the POSAS 2.0 scale. The observer version, completed by a plastic surgeon at the 3-month follow-up, assessed vascularity, pigmentation, thickness, relief, pliability, and surface area, plus an overall opinion. The patient version, completed by patients (or caregivers for children) at 1- and 3-months post-discharge, evaluated pain, itching, color, stiffness, thickness, and irregularity, also with an overall opinion. Both versions used a 10-point scale where 1 indicates "normal skin" and 10 indicates "very different from normal skin."

RESULTS

Figure 1. Self-perception of the patient's scar status (Scale POSAS) at 1 month and 3 months post-discharge (November 2021 - December 2023). N:66



When comparing scores provided by the clinician and those given by patients for each criterion in the POSAS scale, discrepancies are evident, particularly in the items of pigmentation, thickness, relief, pliability, and overall opinion (Figure 2).

Sixty-six patients were included, predominantly adults (85,6%). On average, the percentage of body surface area burned was 12,1%, with second-degree burns observed in 60% of cases and third-degree burns in 40% of them. At three months after discharge, 98,4% of patients noted that their scars differed from normal skin (POSAS Scale item score ≥ 2), with those having severe burns reporting more pronounced differences (Figure 1). Patients become more aware of their scars' characteristics, such as itching and differences in color, stiffness, and thickness, at three months compared to one month after discharge.

Figure 2. Perception of scar condition evaluated by plastic surgeons and patients at 3 months post-discharge using the POSAS scale.

Average score for each of the POSAS scale items Observer (n=66)		Average score for each item of the POSAS scale Patient (n=66)	
item	Average score	item	Average score
Vascularity	4,4	Pain	3,3
Surface area	3,4	Itching	5,7
Pigmentation	4,8	Color	7,0
Thickness	4,0	Thickness	6,2
Relief	3,8	Irregularity	5,6
Pliability	3,9	Stiffness	6,0
General opinion	4,5	General opinion	6,8

CONCLUSIONS

Patients' perceptions of scar quality and associated symptoms changes over time. Comparing results from both the POSAS observer and patient scales offers a valuable tool for scar management that extends beyond the acute phase. Both scales have common elements that facilitate the assessment of scar perception, focusing on aspects significant to patients during their recovery journey. Differences in scores may arise from varying pain thresholds, physical limitations, aesthetic concerns, individual experiences, among other factors. Recognizing these differences is crucial for enhancing clinical models that reinforce patient education about the typical changes in scar appearance and symptoms over time, to adjust expectations and improve overall health experience.

