Abstract

BACKGROUND: Vascular lesions, especially on exposed sites, can be unsightly and may cause significant psychological distress. Lasers are effective in treating such lesions, but relatively few studies have been performed looking at psychological scoring before and after laser therapy.

OBJECTIVES: To assess the change in psychological distress in patients with vascular lesions following laser treatment.

PATIENTS AND METHODS: A prospective study was performed with patients recruited over a 3-month period. Psychological distress was measured using subjective scores on a standard questionnaire before treatment and at a 6-month follow-up. Each patient was treated every 4-8 weeks with an appropriate laser by the same dermatologist until discharge. Forty-two patients were recruited with one of four diagnoses: telangiectasia, port wine stain (PWS), vascular spider or cherry angioma, which occurred mainly on facial or exposed sites.

RESULTS: Following laser treatment, there was a significant decrease in subjective scores of patients with telangiectasia and vascular spiders. Patients with PWS showed objective improvement but this was not reflected in their subjective scores. Psychological distress had reduced significantly in patients with less severe vascular lesions.

CONCLUSIONS: Laser treatment of minor vascular lesions leads to objective improvement, which is paralleled by psychological benefit, but objective benefit in PWS may not be perceived as beneficial by patients.

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